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SHORT STORIES

EDITED BY G. ARTHUR PEARSON (OF PEARSON'S WEEKLY)

No. 536. FOR WEEK ENDING APRIL 8TH, 1899. [ONE PENNY.

The World's Medicine.

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Short Stories

EDITED BY ARTHUR PEARSON

No. 536.] [ONE PENNY.

For the Week ending April 8th, 1899.

The Revenge of Foon Luk.

THE curtain of the Varieties went up like a mist, and the orchestra after the overture began a rondeau. The seats were filled with an anxious and expectant audience. Foon Luk, the child wonder, was to appear. Wonderful things had been written about this mite of Chinese femininity who performed such feats of contortion and strength. The playbills had pictured her in full Oriental Court costume, gay with colours, and golden with the dragons on the silks. She was a success before she appeared.

Before a bar of the music had played she came forth from the wings, with short, quick steps towards the footlights. The grateful applause of the audience came to her as she kneeled down on the mat before beginning. Resting on her knees and hands she bent forward until her head touched the floor.

"She is praying," said one in the audience to his neighbour, "that is the way those heathens pray."

He was right; she was praying, but not one of those whose eyes looked at her could have guessed what her prayer was. Amid a dead silence she arose and stood up while a big, strong-looking Celestial brought chairs and other paraphernalia upon the stage.

"Hurry," he said to her, roughly, in Chinese, "they will laugh at you if you wait as though you were afraid. Hurry, or you will know what the black stick means when you have finished."

She began tremblingly. As fast as the man builded the chairs one on top of the other, her body, serpent-like glided in and out of the rungs, through the open backs, and over the seats. It seemed as though she had the power to balance those beneath her. When she had reached a point so high that the man could no longer reach he tossed the chairs up to her, and this was continued until ten chairs stood, one above the other, in the centre of the stage. All the while he had kept talking in their native language.

"Beware, if you fall, I will prod you like a pig; make but one error and you will never see to-morrow; smile, or you will fail; let a laugh come to your lips, you cat."

To all of these sentences the child replied not one word. She kept her knees from trembling and performed her feats well. When the tenth chair was in position, the man handed her up a lacquer globe. She balanced the globe on the back of the highest chair, then crawling up until she stood on it, she walked it slowly, as it rolled from one end of the chair back to the other.

Not a sound was heard in the theatre—the silence was awful, even the music stopped—until she was safe back on the chair seat again. Then the applause burst out, and for the first time a genuine smile came to her lips, and she bowed, half bashfully—like any child would—in the direction of the misty rows of faces beyond the footlights.

Gliding in and out of the chairs as they were taken down, she reached the stage as she had left it. Then came the man's turn. He faced the audience and bowed obsequiously; then stripping off his outer blouse, he threw himself upon a padded table and beckoned the child to him. She came, and he picked her up and raising her on his upturned feet, balanced her a moment and then sent her through the air in a somersault, and caught her as she descended.

"Ai-ya!" she said, and the audience applauded again.

"What is it now?" he asked her.

"It pains my back."

"The black stick will pain you more than that," he answered, as with a quick, deft jerk, he whirled her round again. The act ended.

Hand in hand, they bowed themselves off the stage, amid applause, but were called back to bow again, once, twice, three times, by the enthusiastic audience.

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That was the *début* of Foon Luk, after two years of hard work under a cruel and vicious owner. She was a slave who had never known freedom. Her parents had sold her for fifteen dollars to Chin Foo, who had taken advantage of her supple limbs and lithe body to make her a paying investment. He had succeeded; and, as he believed, he was on the verge of a fortune.

For two years he had trained her and had beaten her with a malacca cane, which he had been pleased to call the "black stick." It was an instrument of torture in her eyes, and even now the mention of it made her tremble. When she prayed to the god set up in the rooms of Chin Foo, she did not pray for health or happiness or fortune—she prayed that she might die, and at night, as she lay in her bunk, her lips formed prayers to other gods—unknown to her—for a release. She had known no pleasures in her eleven years of life, and she looked forward to nothing but the work in the theatres, which hurt her back. Her "ai-ya's" of pain were naturally mistaken by the audience, who applauded them.

Out of the theatre they went to the home of Chin Foo, down dark streets and across lighted avenues. Not one word was spoken until they were safe in the rooms, which looked sorrowful in their dimness. Then he turned on her, half fiercely.

"I will kill you if you ever again cry out with your 'ai-ya.' You have cost me enough; you must now begin to earn!"

"It was your heel in my back that hurt," she began.

"You should have no hurts. Did I cry out like a woman when I appeared before the Emperor, the Son of Heaven, and the clumsy knife-thrower cast a blade which cut my ears?" and he held his hand up to the side of his head, as if the thought of it pained him still. "No; I smiled, as if it put new strength in my limbs. Go to bed."

And she crept away to sleep, while the Chinaman went out among his friends to tell of his success. In her narrow bunk she prayed, but her prayer for release had in it a tincture of revenge, for she begged Kuung-I, the god of justice, to take her master that he might never come back, and then, suddenly, as if some heathen god had looked kindly at her, a thought came to her which made her start, raise up on one elbow, and peer about in the gloom to see if there was anyone in the room. She scarcely dared think of it, yet she could not put it out of her mind. At last she fell asleep, and dreamed strange things.

"It is done," she called out once, then she awoke and shivered. Whatever her thoughts had been, little Foon Luk was changed when she awoke the next day and rehearsed, as well as the space of the room would allow, the utmost difficult part of her work.

"What has come over you?" asked Chin Foo once, when he found her looking at him with a calm and steady eye.

"Nothing," she answered, evasively, "but to-day I would like to go to the Temple."

"And spill good wine upon the floor for a love, I suppose?" He was in a good humour.

"No; I want no lovers."

He dressed her up like a boy, and took her to the Temple of the Chung Wah Gung San. She prayed before the god of Justice, and she cast the prayer-sticks, and the omens were good. She departed with a light heart.

That day when she went home, and after Chin Foo had gone out, she took his *yen hoe* off the opium tray, and tried to throw it so the point would stick in the door. It was a long while before she succeeded, but when at last the slender point sunk deep in the wood, she was satisfied. Every day when he went out she practised with it, until at last she became so expert that out of every ten times she threw it, seven times would it stick in the door.

At last, one unlucky day, the long wire needle broke. It did not take Chin Foo long to discover it.

"Have you done this?" he asked, holding up the pieces.

"Yes," she answered. "The more tricks, the more money. I was trying a new one."

"What was it?" he demanded, forgetting in his curiosity to be angry. And when she told him, he was so pleased that he promised to get a set of throwing-knives, and teach her all he knew. They had been doing well at the theatres, and he did not beat her so much as he had before he began to get rich. A new trick meant more money. He bought the knives, and together they practised until at last he said:

"You throw better than the *hi-tze*, who appeared before the Emperor."

Her aim was marvellously straight, and her arm was wonderfully strong, if its strength was judged by the depth the steel blades sank into the wood. He took to praising her, for he was soon to double her work. A chance came for them to go with a circus, and now that the knife-throwing was perfect, they would do two acts, and then he would receive a much larger salary. Ah! the sun of prosperity was shining for him, and he would soon be a rich man, if she would only live long enough.

He signed a contract with the circus manager. It was settled. They were to start through the country in a week. He came home and told the child. She looked startled.

"You do not want to go?" he asked abruptly.

"Yes, yes, I want to go! But—see, I have no more good clothes. I must make some clothes."

He was in a liberal mood. "I will buy you some."

She wanted money before she went. She had tried for it and failed. She looked about the room in despair. Upon her wrist was a jade bracelet. Ah! that would do! She dressed herself in the boy's suit she had been wont to wear when going about the quarter, and taking one of the throwing-knives, locked the door behind her and slipped down the stairs into the street. She hurried around the corner to the shop of Su Quong, the locksmith, who had always been kind to her.

"Su Quong," she said, "make me a knife like this," and she pulled the broad-bladed weapon out from under her blouse. He took it, and examined it critically.

"Ah, little one, but that is no use. That would cut nothing," and he struck it against a piece of wood. "See, it only bruises."

"Yes, but I want you to make a good one, with the same shape. Make it so keen that the edges will cut through a pillow filled with down. But it must run the same shape, and with a handle like this one."

"And who are you going to kill, little highbinder?" he asked.

"I am not a highbinder," she answered trembling. "I want the knife for my work at the theatre, but I have no money. You can take my jade," and she held the bracelet towards him.

"I want no money, little one, and if you were a highbinder, I would still be your friend. The gods are not always good to the most deserving."

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She ran back to her rooms, and was safe once more. She practised throwing her knives at a revolving disc which Chin Foo had made, and which was the most difficult feat known to throwers. She was to do this in the circus. The day before they were to leave, she went to the locksmith's to get her knives. The old man had made a marvellous sharp weapon, exactly like the other, but for its keenness and the fact that it had a finer point. He handed them to her.

"I have asked the gods to bless them both," he said, gravely. "When you need a friend, come to me. I knew your father."

Then she went out. The sharp knife she hid secretly and carefully.

They were with the circus at last. "The Chinese Child Knife-Thrower and Premier Contortionist" was a successful favourite. In every town in which the circus appeared, ladies insisted on calling on her in her dressing-room. They made her presents, and raved over her. They did not know what a woman she really was.

Chin Foo, successful beyond his dreams, took to the opium and cut down his act, so that Foon Luk did nearly all the work. The principal thing he did now was to hold the wooden ball suspended by a rope, and swing it gently, while she threw knives at it. Once a carelessly thrown knife had struck him in the side, but as such knives as they were could not penetrate cloth, it fell to the sawdust, and he had scowled at her and called her "a cat."

He was careful about scolding her very much now, because a change had come over her. She seemed more of a woman. There was a peculiar light in her narrow eyes, and a firmness about her lips that set him to thinking.

One day the manager said to him:

"Chin, that ball trick with the knives don't take as well as it used to. What's the matter with you standing up against a board, and letting her throw them round you?"

"See lat?" asked Chin, putting one hand up to his injured ear; "big knife thlower in Chiny, he thlow before Emplorlor 'n hit ear. No good."

But the manager was firm and insisted, and the end of it all was that the next week the Chinese Child Wonder was throwing knives round Chin Foo's head and body, and coming so close to him that he could feel the wind they raised. He told her she threw them too hard, and because she did not answer him he struck her. She cried out in pain, and a woman rider—who heard her—told Chin Foo if he did not keep his hands off her she would get a couple of the canvas-men to give him a thrashing.

The circus had struck a new town on Sunday, and Chin Foo, more than ever a slave to opium, had spent the day with his beloved pipe. He kept at it Monday, and when he dressed to appear in the knife-throwing act, his eyes were half closed and he was drowsy with the drug. He leaned with his back against the board, and the applause which greeted Foon Luk seemed to come from a great distance. He shut his eyes, because the bright lights made his head whirl about unpleasantly.

"Thud!" That was the first knife. He felt it go by his ear. Thud, thud, thud, they came and sunk deep in the board. The audience applauded wildly. There were four more knives. The next one struck under his arm-pit.

"That's a great throw!" yelled a man in a seat on the edge of the ring. Scarcely before he had finished, another knife was hurtling through the air. Those who were looking saw it strike the blouse of the Chinaman on the left side, they saw his arms reach up spasmodically, and then he sank down in the sawdust. Like one dazed, the girl stood with two knives still in her hand, while the circus men rushed over to the wounded man. As they carried him out of the ring on a litter, she fainted. When she came to, the bareback rider was fanning her, and there were ladies standing around.

"Chin Foo hurt?" she managed to ask.

"Yes," said one of the ladies, "he is hurt very bad."

"Chin Foo dead?" she asked again.

"Yes," she was answered.

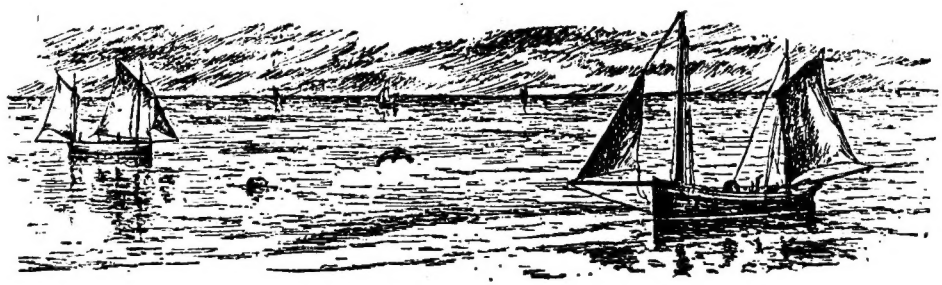
Then she closed her eyes peacefully and fell asleep.

The rural coroner and his jury finally decided it was an accident. The knife which killed the Chinaman was the same as the rest, and there was nothing to show any murderous intent on the part of the child, who was released.

In the trunk of the bareback-rider was a knife, the edges of which were like razors. Long afterwards, when Foon Luk had gone, the rider showed it, blood-stained as it was, to Mdlle. Mirabella, the trapeze artist.

"That's what killed the Chinaman," he said. "It would go through boiler iron—that knife would. I helped to carry him in the tent, and I saw it, and swapped it for one of the others. I didn't want to see the little gal convicted."

Fred Wilson.



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JONAH'S ANTIPATHY;

Or, THE COCK OF THE WALK.

AN excited and somewhat acrimonious discussion was taking place as to a suitable name for the pup. It was at the breakfast table. Everybody had a theory to advance, and seemed disposed to take it as a personal affront if that particular suggestion was not adopted.

Mr. Lightfoot thought that the pup should be called *May*, on the ground that May is the month of promise, and he believed that this pup promised to be the ugliest little beast that ever wagged a tail.

His daughter, Violet, the owner of the dog, was a sweet girl, with a soul above vulgar jokes. She wanted a name which was noble and dignified. Something that recalled the historic and beautiful.

Her brother, after a moment's silence, suggested "Billie," on the ground that it would represent both Sir William Harcourt, and the Emperor of Germany.

Mrs. Lightfoot thought it ought to be called "Fido," because all dogs are called "Fido." Moreover, she was sure she would never be able to learn a fresh name for a dog.

Mrs. Lightfoot was a woman whose range of view was strictly limited. Her intellectual attainments were trifling, and her impression of things in general somewhat gloomy. She was a woman who turned out her dining-room twice a week, and changed her servants once a quarter.

The debate on the dog's name was resumed with vigour again and again, at last it was settled by a flash of inspiration.

One day the pup playfully swallowed a silver thimble.

"That settles it," said Miss Lightfoot, eagerly. "I shall call him 'Jonah.'"

Mr. Lightfoot looked puzzled. "Why should we call him Jonah?" he asked.

"I believe," said Miss Lightfoot, with dignity, "that Jonah was the man who swallowed a whale."

She threw out this remark with the air of conscious strength, like an advocate who quotes a forgotten Act of Parliament, and puts his opponent out of court.

Then she saw her mistake, and with that delightful lack of logic, which is a woman's strength, added: "Well, I don't care whether Jonah swallowed the whale, or whether the whale swallowed Jonah. I shall call the dog 'Jonah.' So that settles it."

Naturally that did settle it. You can't argue with a girl who takes such a broad view of the facts of the case.

So the dog was called Jonah by everybody except Mrs. Lightfoot, whose mind oscillated between Fido and Tiny; Fido, for the reason already stated, Tiny, because she once had a school friend whose brother's chum had a dog named Tiny. But never under any circumstance was Mrs. Lightfoot known to call the animal by its proper name.

As the pup grew up into doghood it proved to be one of the most unpleasing animals that ever lived. Whether the discussion over its name had in some way warped its moral faculties, or whether the thimble had proved so hard of digestion as to undermine the dog's higher nature, will never be known.

Its very appearance created suspicion. No dog fancier would have dared to classify it. Its hair was long, thin and wiry, its tail short and bony-looking. It had long legs, a very wide and powerful chest, a small nobby head, and eyes which were uncannily bright and defiant-looking.

When a stranger spoke to him, he generally curled up his lips expressively, and showed an appalling set of teeth, while every hair on his body stood up stiff and and straight like a wire. Then a low, grumbling sound was heard, like an earthquake many miles away, which steadily increased in volume, until it resembled the roar of a decent-sized lion.

After this, the stranger would generally change the conversation. There was no encouragement in trying to talk to Jonah.

There are some dogs with whom you are intimate as soon as you meet them. You roll them over on their backs, and call them fancy names, and dig them in the ribs.

No man who valued his life ever attempted such a liberty with Jonah. It would have amounted to an act of suicide.

Even the family treated him with some deference. If Jonah fancied any particular chair he simply occupied it. Nobody ventured to turn him out. In fact if he had been the Vicar of the Parish, or even the Rate Collector he could scarcely have met with more courtesy.

The first request made to a visitor always was: "Please don't touch the dog."

Most visitors, after the first glance, had no wish to touch the dog. In fact, many of them suddenly remembered important appointments at the other end of London. Sometimes a visitor would try to fascinate the animal by offering him a biscuit. But no biscuit that was ever baked would soften Jonah's heart. He simply swallowed it with an air of cynical distrust, and then lay on the ground watching the simple-minded stranger with glittering eyes, apparently with a view to seeing that no biscuits were smuggled into his pockets, to eat on the way home.

To be sure there were advantages attached to this. Mrs. Lightfoot's mother dreaded the animal to such an extent that she reduced a fortnight's visit to one of three days, for which Mr. Lightfoot was so grateful that he said he would consider it a privilege to be allowed to pay the dog tax twice a year.

When he walked abroad, Jonah made himself equally objectionable. It was observed that no cats were seen in the neighbourhood. Jonah hated cats. The very word "cat" seemed to upset him. At the sound of it, every hair on his body would stiffen immediately, and when he found his feelings had been trifled with, and that there was not a cat in sight, he would step downstairs into the kitchen, and look for the servants.

He offered battle to every dog in the neighbourhood. No provocation was required. When Jonah met a dog, big or little, he at once offered to fight. If the opposing dog was modest, and showed no disposition for a combat,

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Jonah would spare him with a dignified air of disappointment. But the slightest sign of spirit or independence in another dog, roused his ire at once, and he took off his coat, so to speak, and did battle, until the other dog expressed himself as satisfied.

In short, Jonah was a heavy burden on all who knew him. Everybody feared him. His pretty mistress had no admirers, because Jonah didn't allow that kind of thing, and the entire family groaned under his tyranny. It was no use to think of giving him away, because, in the first place, nobody would accept him, and, in the second place, Jonah flatly refused to go. As for having him poisoned—well, it was generally agreed that that *ought* to be done, but nobody seemed anxious to undertake it.

At last Jonah met his match.

There was a fox terrier living a few doors away, who was Jonah's great antipathy.

This fox terrier was a prize dog, and a conceited, uppish little beast into the bargain.

It used to make game of Jonah.

Its favourite trick was to get behind its own gate, through which Jonah could not pass, and laugh at him as he went by, and call him names and make grimaces.

This kind of thing nearly drove Jonah mad. He used to get up early in the morning in the hope of catching that fox terrier, and killing it.

The fox terrier's owner was a young doctor who used to stand at the window to watch Jonah and his mistress go past. He seemed to take a great deal of interest in the matter, whether his interest was really centred in the fox terrier, Jonah, or Miss Lightfoot, it would be difficult to say.

One morning, Jonah was taking his mistress for a walk, when he espied the fox terrier turning the corner. Jonah stepped out briskly. Things had been very dull of late. He had not had a fight since the previous morning, and as for cats—well it was nearly a month since he destroyed an old Thomas which had eluded his attacks for several years. He had strong hopes he might have five minutes real fun.

For once the fox terrier was off his guard, and before he knew exactly what was happening, Jonah had seized him by the neck and was shaking him vigorously.

Then Jonah laid his victim down, and stood over him growling. The fox terrier wondered if the world had come to an end, and wished he had lived a better life.

Jonah was thoroughly enjoying himself. To make the situation perfect, he only required a little opposition. If only the fox-terrier would bite him, Jonah would be a happy dog for days to come.

Just then he heard a quick step, and looked round with an air of annoyance.

It was the young doctor, who owned the fox terrier. Jonah was delighted. Here was some opposition at last. He had never yet met a human being who could face him when he growled, and showed his teeth, and erected all his hairs.

He went through his usual programme, but to his surprise, the young doctor, instead of retreating, watched him with stern grey eyes, and produced a small, but unpleasant-looking dog-whip.

Jonah felt it was time to put an end to such nonsense, and stepped up slowly to do battle.

Quick as thought—while Jonah was selecting a convenient part of the doctor's legs to lay hold of—his opponent caught him by the back of the neck in a grip of iron.

Then Jonah, the hitherto unconquered, was thrown down on the ground and whipped.

At first he growled and swore outrageously, then he barked, at last he whined for mercy.

It was a hearty thrashing, a thrashing that seemed to embrace the whole of Jonah's cast-iron body. When it was finished, he got up, and scarcely knew himself. He felt sore all over. It was worse than fighting. His tail was so limp, that he rather doubted that he had one, and felt as if he didn't much care.

Miss Lightfoot arrived on the scene.

"How dare you thrash my dear little dog?" she inquired haughtily.

The young doctor raised his hat.

"Your dear little dog, madam," he said courteously, "is a nuisance to the neighbourhood. I have great hopes that the slight chastisement it has been my pleasure to administer will reform his character."

"I must admit that Jonah is a little bit troublesome," admitted Miss Lightfoot reluctantly. "You must really try to be a good doggie, Jonah."

Jonah winked sagaciously, and even made a faint attempt to wag his tail.

"You know Miss Lightfoot," said the young doctor, who by the way evidently knew her name, "what that dog wants is a master."

Miss lightfoot blushed slightly, and stammered some words to that effect, that he was the first person who had dared to correct the dog.

"With proper training he would be a fine old fellow, wouldn't you, Jonah?" he continued pleasantly. "Come here, and say how d'you do," and Jonah came, like a lamb.

That happened two years ago.

Now in one of the suburbs there is a young doctor, with an increasing practice, and a very pretty wife.

In their back garden, chained to a kennel there is a dog named Jonah.

He is a model to all the dogs for miles around. He goes through life gravely and sedately. His dislike for cats is a reasonable one, and goes no further than driving them from the back garden. He is on good terms with the neighbours' dogs, and only fights when circumstances compel him to. It must be confessed however that when he does fight, he thoroughly enjoys himself.

There is one person to whom he is sincerely attached—his master. For his mistress he has a patronising and somewhat contemptuous affection, but he is persuaded that the doctor is the bravest, cleverest and greatest man who lives.

Besides the doctor and his wife, and Jonah, there is one other member of the family—a fox terrier. Jonah still hates that fox terrier with all the force of a strong, well-governed mind. He doesn't bully him, or attack him—he simply ignores his existence.

That fox terrier continues to be Jonah's antipathy.

Lloyd Williams.

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GUILLAUME.

It all occurred in the Department of La Vendée, whither a business matter had taken me.

I had made an appointment with Guillaume Blaisot, the farmer with whom my business was to be transacted, to meet him at Marans, at the mouth of the Sévre, opposite to the Isle of Rhé, in Pertuis-Poitou. I reached Maillepais, after a very uncomfortable journey, by the diligence, hoping to proceed by water.

As I was waiting at the door of the inn for the arrival of the boat that mine host had promised me, I perceived an old acquaintance approaching, whom, by his little waxcloth hat and his wooden leg, I had at once recognized as Maitre Berand, better known as Fait-tout. Berand was one of those equivocal traders who get a livelihood by various nameless handicrafts, and who, in common parlance, are said to live by their wits. He now assured me that business called him in the direction in which I was going.

I invited him to embark with me in the boat, which at that moment came alongside, He thankfully accepted my invitation, and I thus secured a companion, who, if not altogether trustworthy, was at least well acquainted with the country and its inhabitants, and who was, moreover, himself an interesting subject for my observation.

Immediately on leaving Maillepais, we found ourselves in the district familiarly known as *Marais Mouille*, and a wonderful spectacle it presented. As far as the eye could reach, it seemed as if it were a water landscape, whereon numberless islets fringed with willows and ivy, were floating; now and then we passed a larger one, on which hemp and flax were cultivated. On the most elevated point of these islands stand the solitary dwellings of the hutters; they are of plaited wickerwork, and look like so many beehives. They have neither window nor chimney, and the door appears too low for a full-grown man to enter without stooping.

We could generally distinguish a fire flickering on the hearth, and sending its smoke through all the interstices of the basket-work. The older huts are often covered with a mass of vegetation; and not unfrequently the willow wands woven into the dwelling bud and sprout, and form a thick green trellis-work of leafy branches around the hut. The people find their food in the waters by which they are surrounded, the neighbouring towns offering a ready market for their fish and ducks.

In winter, when the waters often rise to the level of their dwellings, the poor people are forced to take refuge, with their wives and children, in their boats, which are kept by them ready for such emergencies. In these, they frequently pass long days and nights, till the floods are abated.

As I wished to see the interior of one of these huts, we drew towards the shore and landed. The inside was incrusted with a black and shining coating of soot.

In the dusky background, two cows were lying down and chewing the cud at ease before a sort of rough crib. This was the only piece of furniture in the hut, with the exception of a pair of earthen pitchers, a clumsy stool and a hurdle covered with a layer of moss; on this lay a woman whose appearance showed her to be suffering from the biliary fever so common in this moist and fœtid atmosphere.

To our words of comfort she at first made no reply; but at length, rousing herself, she said:

"What good can anything do *me?* I have seen the *White Boat!* All I want is the priest."

These words had a startling effect, not only on the boatman, but on Fait-tout, notwithstanding his habitual readiness to parade his scepticism.

"'The White Boat!'" exclaimed both together, in a half whisper, at the same time looking towards the shore.

"Yes, yes," continued the sick woman, with feverish excitement: "I was coming with a bundle of willows from the other side of the island, and there, gliding noiselessly through the channel, I saw the death-boat, with the yellow dwarf seated at the helm; and as I passed, I heard him cough and groan; I felt his poison breath upon me, and fell to the ground. My husband found me and brought me home, and I have never raised my head since, and never shall."

I endeavoured to soothe the poor woman, and to explain the thing as an optical delusion; but she stared wildly into the darkness, and my companions slipped quietly away; I myself felt a sort of indefinable dread, thus left alone in the dusky hut with the dying woman, and hastened into the air.

When we got back to the boat, our conversation was in monsyllables; and to set it going, I made some inquiries respecting young Blaisot whom I was to meet at Marans. At the sound of his name, Fait-tout started from his reverie, but made as though he had not heard me, and called my attention to the great number of boats which were lying in a little bay which we were then crossing.

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We did not reach Marans till late in the evening, and there were no tidings of B'aisot at the inn. To my repeated and urgent inquiries, the host replied with a counter-question:

"Do you mean old Jerome Blaisot?"

"No; his son, Guillaume," said Fait-tout, answering for me, with singular emphasis.

"Guillaume?" repeated the man in astonishment.

"And why not?" I rejoined sharply. "I wonder what reason he can have for staying away?"

"I cannot say," replied mine host, with some hesitation, "how can any third person assign reasons for another? To-morrow is our market-day, and there will surely be some of Blaisot's people in town. You can ask them, sir, any questions you please."

"*Ask*, indeed!" muttered Fait-tout in a mocking tone as I moved away.

Marans, on the following day, was thronged with hutters, bringing in the rich spoils of fishing and the chase. Still, all my inquiries for Blaisot were unavailing; and the evident shyness in answering raised my previous uneasiness to the highest pitch.

On my return to the inn, I found Berand the centre of a wondering circle. He was tatooing an allegorical decoration on the arm of a sailor.

"Behold!" he said.

I finally took counsel with mine host, who advised me to proceed, in his conveyance, to the cottage of the Blaisots, which was about a mile and a half distant. Fait-tout would be my guide. In half an hour the matter was arranged and Berand and I set off. At sunset we reached Jerome Blaisot's cottage.

We approached the cottage. An elderly man appeared on the threshold, but, without responding to our greeting he turned and called "Loubette! Loubette!" A girl came out of the door behind him. I observed her awkward height and ungainly form, but not until I stood beside her did I notice the extreme strength and sweetness of her face. On my calling for her brother, the old man uttered a quick exclamation, but, silencing him with a glance, the girl said quietly:

"You are, doubtless, the gentleman whose letter we gave back to the postman two days ago?"

"Gave back again! And why did you do that?"

"Because he to whom it was addressed is not here."

"Nor in all little Poitou!" exclaimed the old man.

"But you know where he is," I rejoined; "you could have given the postman the necessary instructions."

"We know nothing," cried the father; "and he who says otherwise is no friend of ours. Guillaume is away on his own errand, without either consulting or revealing it to us."

"Yes, yes, father," interrupted the maiden; "you see that the gentleman meant well by my brother, and why then should you make a disturbance, or deny him? You will take some refreshment with us, sir?" And so saying, she covered the table, and thus diverted my questionings and my curiosity.

After a while, the old Blaisot appeared to have regained his self-possession, and to have formed some great resolution. He began by asking me my reason for coming, and my answers had the effect of quieting his suspicions altogether; and without any further allusion to his son, we talked of things in general, and then discussed the business I had in hand, and the conditions on which it should be executed.

By degrees, however, and with the deepening twilight the conversation flagged, and we sat in silence. Loubette went up and down the room, busied about the household matters, and often stood as if listening at the window; then she came and sat down with us again.

Suddenly a most strange and piercing cry, like that of a bird, sounded without. Both father and daughter started up, but each with a very different expression of countenance. He said, half aloud.

"It is the night-raven, and at so late an hour! That too, bodes no good."

She seemed to be listening intently; and, as three similar sounds were heard in quick succession, each drawing nearer, she said:

"A boat must have disturbed him in his nest. It is the sleeping time of beasts, but the eating time of men. If you please, sir, supper is now ready."

She had already lit the lamp, and we sat down to a table well provided with simple fare.

As the old peasant gradually thawed, and threw off his suspicion, I began to be quite comfortable; and only remarked after a while, that the girl, who had often risen from the table to see about one thing or another, as well as about my sleeping quarters for the night, had now absented herself altogether.

Fait-tout also withdrew, saying that he had business in the neighbourhood. So Blaisot and I remained alone.

The old man told me a good deal about his son—how brave, obedient, and ndustrious he used to be, and how he had been betrothed to a wealthy maiden of the district; who had been faithless to him, and taken another person—and how, since then, he had become altered in everything.

He was even going, in answer to a question of mine, to explain what he meant by this, when we heard heavy footsteps and the clattering of arms outside, and in a moment the door was opened, and the corporal of the gendarmerie of Chaille entered the room in full uniform, let the butt-end of his musket fall noisily on the floor, and greeted us in the peculiar jovial, free-and-easy tone belonging to his class.

Old Jerome rose, then sank down again as pale as death, when his son was called for.

"He is not here," he said brokenly.

"Then where shall we find him?" questioned the officer. "Your son is a *refractoire*; we have orders to arrest him, and the government has placed a fine upon his head. So you will not speak? Ah! I understand—it is because you are a traitor to the government yourself! Well, we shall see."

The old man declared in the most eloquent manner his attachment to the July dynasty, and his ignorance respecting any offence committed against any government whatsoever.

"Hold your peace, you old hypocrite," replied the soldier. "Do we not know you of old? Did you not do just the same when you were thirty or forty years younger?"

The poor man would, perhaps, have been able to bear all the threats against life and liberty, but the thought of being deprived of his goods and chattels by an execution awoke his covetousness—the hereditary vice of the peasants of Poitou.

"For goodness' sake, M. Durnad!" he piteously exclaimed, with clasped hands, "do believe me! My son has never returned home since——"

Here he stopped, having observed the scrutinising glance cast on him by the officer, who said:

"Your son was seen yesterday at Vallembreuse. It is likely that his father knows not where he passed the night! Enough prattle—I shall search the house!"

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Just then Loubette's voice was heard without, and one of the men who were stationed without, dragged her roughly in—she protesting angrily the while.

"Ah! Here we have the lady of the house," cried the officer, ironically. "Where dost thou come from at so strangely late an hour, my dear?"

"From a place where one does not say *thou* to girls one has not the honour to know, Monsieur!" Loubette answered boldly; "but since you would know, Monsieur, I have been taking the shepherd his supper."

The gendarmes at once confronted her—they had caught her coming from the very opposite direction. But Loubette was not to be confused by this. She asserted that she had gone round to the field where the sheep were feeding for the purpose of fetching the sickle, which she had forgotten at noon.

"Perhaps you may think that I wanted to cut bread with this," added she with a sneer, as she drew the sickle from under her apron.

The officer now tried to catch her by all manner of artful questions and assertions; but she parried them so well, that he began to contradict himself, and knew no longer what he was about.

"There's no catching the sly creature!" he exclaimed at last, in dudgeon. "Two of you stay here to watch these people, and the rest of us will rummage the whole place—he must be here."

The officer had taken no further notice of me than that implied in his first curt greeting, for he knew me before. But I plainly saw that he found my presence inconvenient. I followed him to the front door, and heard one of the gendarmes say to him: "Was not that a boat that glided over the water behind the bushes yonder?"

In fact, we soon heard the sound of oars, and the trilling of a cheerful song, then a scream, and a momentary silence; then some quick oar-strokes, a rustling in the thicket; and, an instant after, the vagabond Berand, my travelling companion, rushed towards the house, breathless, and evidently beside himself, and threw himself down upon the bank before the door.

At once assailed by the corporal, who not unreasonably charged him with being an old drunkard, he broke out into the following unconnected sentences:

"I have seen—seen him! There—there—I tell—I tell you. He glided in his white boat out from the bushes—and—and—under the trees opposite—and he was gone!"

"But *who*, in the name of all that is good?" screamed out the corporal in his impatience.

"Who? He! The White Boat, and the little yellow man at the helm! and he had a corpse in its white grave-clothes lying across the boat before him; its head was hanging over the water!"

"The wooden-leg is drunk!" laughed the corporal.

"Would that I had dreamt it, and were not sober!" said poor Berand. "But I have not only seen but heard. 'Turn back, unhappy man!' the figure exclaimed, 'or I will turn thee round and round.' The brandy still gave me courage to answer, 'Man or woman, whom hast thou there?' But it cried out in a voice that went through the marrow of my bones, 'I have got Guillaume to-day, and in eight days I shall have thee!' That was enough for me; and here I am, at least on dry land still; and in eight days I shall take good care to be far enough from here!"

Scarcely had the cripple named the name of Guillaume, than the brigadier hurried off, with an exclamation, to the canal, and all his party after him. We heard the click of their muskets as they cocked them in setting off; next, we heard the officer call out three times, and then a gun was fired; and, on hastening to the place whence the sound came, we found the gendarmes collected on the banks of the canal.

"If the little yellow man has escaped us, he has at all events left his freight behind him," called out the corporal, as he pointed towards a moonlit spot on the opposite side of the small canal which belonged to Blaisot's land.

With horror, we discovered a corpse stretched out at full length in the moonlight. The gendarmes brought out the boat in which our wooden-legged friend had just arrived, and went to fetch the body. Scarcely had they laid it down upon the dyke, than Loubette, followed by her father and their guard, rushed towards it, kneeling down to look at the face, and finding it unrecognisible through decomposition, snatched at the right hand of the corpse, and exclaiming "Heavens, it is my brother!" sprang up, and held out a ring to her father, naming the names of Guillaume and Louise inscribed on it, and a flaming heart between them.

After the first outburst of grief, the girl attained a remarkable degree of composure; though there was something overstrained and excited about it; and it was often interrupted by almost convulsive gestures, wringing of the hands and deep-drawn sobs. However, it was such as enabled her to give all the orders she deemed necessary.

Agreeably to her directions, the corpse was taken to an out-building near the house, to which Loubette made her escape as soon as she had, with inconceivable celerity, prepared everything against the arrival of guests.

The old father appeared quite broken down and childish with grief and horror; and, with lamentable groans, and unconnected cries, he meekly allowed himself to be led back to the arm-chair in his own room.

Either by the shot, or by the sort of presentiment or instinct which never fails to draw people to a place where a calamity has occurred, even before any definite tidings of it can have had time to reach them, a number of the country people of the neighbouring district were soon collected. Loubette was now busily occupied; for, according to the popular custom, which makes a death, as well as a wedding or a christening—joy and sorrow alike—a pretext for eating and drinking, she had to provide both food and liquor, during which task she seemed to be struggling rather with anxiety than grief. Old Jerome welcomed each arrival with loud lamentations, which did not, however, interfere with his activity in passing round the jug.

As soon as Loubette had attended to her guests, and especially seen that the gendarmes were favourably placed as regarded the cider-jug and the brandy-pitcher, she hurried out again and placed at the threshold of the little out-house, where lay the corpse, covered with a coarse linen cloth, two lighted candles, which were not rendered superfluous by the dawning light—for it was a dark corner enough.

The maiden was seated at the entrance with her head covered, and as one neighbour after another came in, she appeared neither to see nor hear, and kept all at a distance by the violence of her emotion; so that even those who would fain have taken a nearer look at the body, refrained from passing her. Each fresh comer was contented with a hasty glance and a murmured prayer and then withdrew.

The corporal, finding I had studied the law, had asked

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me to visit the body, and to draw up the *procès-verbal* of the finding of the corpse. Berand offered to assist me.

On the discovery of a *corps malheureux*—as a body whose manner of death is suspicious is termed in this country—it happens that the next of kin devolves the duties of preparing it for burial on an official styled the *grave-digger of the lost*, who is seldom a person of good repute, although the pay is excellent.

Fait-tout seemed, nevertheless, accustomed to the work, and his help was acceptable, for it was no pleasant task; and I wrote what he dictated in answer to my inquiries.

Of a sudden, as he was busied with the right arm, he burst into an exclamation of astonishment.

"What is the matter?" I cried.

"What is the matter!" he replied softly, coming nearer to me; "What do you see on this arm?"

"I see a tattooing mark, such as you were making to-day at the inn at Marans."

"Just so; the altar, the lily, the cross, and a cypher. Now, except the lad on whom I tattooed it this morning there is only one in all Lower Poitou who has that design on his arm; and that is, or was—not Guillaume Blaisot, but Pierre Sauvage, who was drowned a week ago, no one knew where, or how, and now——"

A half-suppressed scream prevented the completion of the sentence, and on looking round, we saw Loubette standing erect at the entrance, pale, and with dishevelled hair and flaming eyes, and her arm stiffly extended.

"Come hither, maiden!" he exclaimed, "your brother is alive! At least, this is no more he than it is the Pope of Rome."

But her emotion was at first too great for words; and when she did speak, the accents were not those of joy, but of anguish and terror:

"On thy life, say not another word! And who allowed you to meddle with the dead? What business have you here?" she added with a deep groan, at the same time approaching him.

I quieted her with a word of explanation and assurance. She grasped my hand, but cast a look of suspicion on my companion. The latter, after a short pause, during which he displayed more feeling than was his wont, exclaimed:

"Now, I see! You knew that it was not Guillaume?"

She nodded assent.

"You are a brave lass, and I understand the game; and may the dickens take me if I meddle or mar! I've no such liking for the bloodhounds, especially since the 'glorious days' in Paris yonder. So, my word upon it, I'm silent."

"Now I know the meaning of the bird-call," said I to Loubette; "a signal that Guillaume was there with the corpse, was it not?"

Again she nodded, and whispered, faintly smiling:

"He had most fortunately seen it lying in the mud at the border of a little creek two hours ago, and arranged it all with me. He is in concealment, while he is supposed to be dead, and the hue and cry is thus stopped. He hovers about here, as though Louise had bewitched him, and declares that he must speak to her once more."

She turned again to Berand.

"You will keep our secret?" she said, looking earnestly at him, and holding out her hand.

He was about to grasp it in his own, when he suddenly drew back, and exclaimed, angrily:

"Not so fast! Your fine brother, then, was the yellow dwarf with the hollow cough, and the corpse in his White Boat, who gave me such a fright as he chased me on the water? No, that was too much—that's not to be forgiven! To make such a fool of me and terrify me like a child with a scarecrow! We'll see what the corporal says to that game!"

Earnestly I strove to appease him; but, unluckily, another weight dropped into the wrong scale.

"No, no," said he; "what a fool I should have been! The Sauvages have offered fifty pounds for the body of their son, and I may as well have the reward as any one else."

He was rushing out, but she stood in the doorway, and placing both her hands on his shoulders, and looking at him with sharp and earnest gaze, while her cheeks glowed with excitement, she said, in a calm, but harsh and determined voice:

"Look well to yourself, wooden-leg; you have a choice to make. Are we in future to be friends or foes? Give me your word that you will say no more than you are asked, and from this hour you have a home in the house of the Blaisots—and you know the value of such a home to you and the like of you. Or say but a word, make but a sign—a gesture that may involve peril to my brother, and you have Loubette Blaisot for your deadly enemy,—and Loubette keeps her word for good and for evil. If *you* know it not, ask throughout Lower Poitou; and then, old man, ask yourself whether it can bring you honour or profit in this country to betray a loyal Vendean to the gendarmerie? Guillaume is *lost* if he is not dead! Do you understand? As to the promise of the Sauvages, the Blaisots can fulfil it as well."

A host of conflicting feelings was struggling in the man's breast. It was mortified vanity alone that had caused him to swerve from his original resolution, and he was able to estimate Loubette's gratitude, as well as her vengeance, at their proper value. He now put his hand into that which she held out.

"Done!—I keep counsel."

It was indeed high time that we came to an understanding; for all the neighbours had withdrawn, and the corporal had called twice; and scarcely had we again turned to the corpse, and Loubette resumed her attitude at the entrance, when he appeared and inquired if the deposition were not yet ready, as it was time he should be setting out. I hastily wrote the concluding words, and handed the document to him. He scarcely looked at it; and it was evident that the cider had done its work. Calling his men together, he departed with them and old Jerome, to make his deposition before the nearest magistrate.

No sooner had the tread of the gendarmes died away in the distance, than Loubette sprang to the back-door, and repeated the bird-call that I had head at the beginning of the evening. After a few minutes, in company with a young peasant, she walked into the room.

The resemblance between them was striking. He seemed a manly young fellow, and his face bore traces of the grief he had suffered through his faithless sweetheart. Loubette made us known to one another, and I immediately offered to take him with me to Marans, whence he could easily get across the country. He accepted my proposal with sincere thanks; and Loubette—bravest, strongest soul that I have ever known—rose and laid her arms about his neck: "You must go now!" she whispered; and I then saw that with him the light would go out of her life.

"My father!" whispered the young man. But Loubette shook her head, and without a tear in her

brave, beautiful eyes, with even a smile, to give him courage, on her lips, she pushed him gently out from the home they had always known together, out into the darkness and the uncertainty of the night.

Berand stayed to dig a grave in the garden; for the brigadier had decided that Guillaume had taken his own life, and could have no Christian burial. Guillaume took his seat beside me in the car, gathered up the reins, and we were off. We drove on for about an hour and a half, when he suddenly halted, and said:

"Excuse me, sir, I will not detain you, but I have business here hard by."

I represented to him the risk he incurred, and expressed my surprise at his having any bus ness that could hinder him for a quarter of an hour under such circumstances. It availed not, and he only entreated me to wait for him.

"Only ten minutes!" he exclaimed, with emotion. "It is no business—it is but a house—a look. I cannot leave the country without"——and he was gone.

I fastened the horse to a tree, and followed, to be at hand in case of trouble. He stood awhile beneath a tree that was growing out of the hedge which surrounded the garden. The window of a projecting angle of the building was just opposite, and doubtless he had good reasons for choosing his post. The curtains were drawn, and the inmates of the house seemed buried in sleep. The distant village clock struck three, and I thought it high time that we were again on the road.

I approached, and bade him be comforted, and take courage. He turned swiftly at sight of me, and his expression awed me; it was rather one of anger than of sorrow, with the same stern fixed look that he had in common with his sister.

"One moment more!" he whispered, softly. "She must know that I have been here, and then she will see how to settle it with her conscience. Yes, I hope she may learn that my corpse was found here!"

Just then a light appeared at one of the windows, and the wailing cry of a little child crept out on the still air of the night.

The young fellow beside me trembled, and the stern expression about his lips changed to one of pain. He looked at me helplessly a moment, and then he said, in a hushed voice:

"Louise! Ah, I did not know—Loubette did not tell me!"

"Come!" I said, touching his arm gently. "Come! For Loubette's sake you must be off!"

"True," he said. "It is all over."

He let go the bough, which swung against the window, and fastened the cravat round his neck; and in a few seconds was seated by my side, lost in thought, and rapidly urging forward the horse on the road to Marans.

He drew up at the bridge of Vix, and declared that his route now lay in a different direction.

I offered him the charge of a little farm in Touraine, if he would let me know where to find him. He was evidently grateful for my sympathy, but declined the offer, saying:

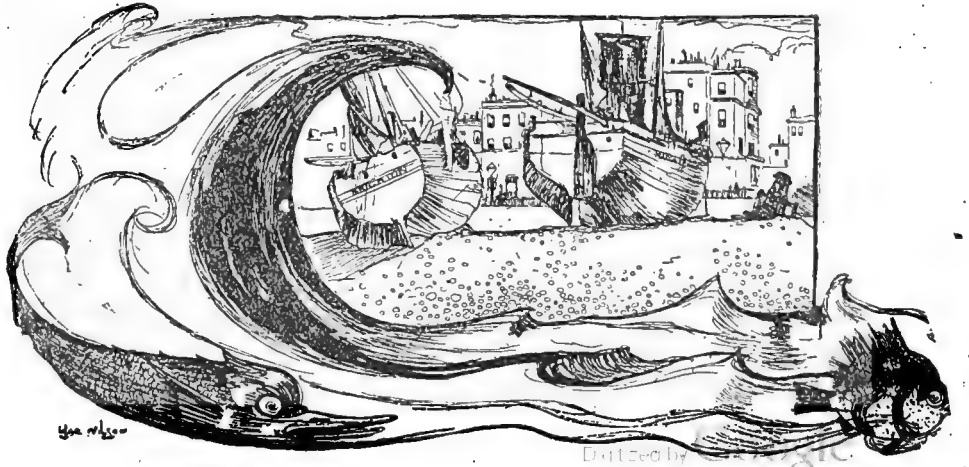
"It can't be; I must live as the rest do. To manage a farm properly, I must have a wife, and I could not think of that. Man must labour in the quietness and the peace of his heart and of his life, and that I cannot do. I should never see a gendarme without thinking he was seeking me."

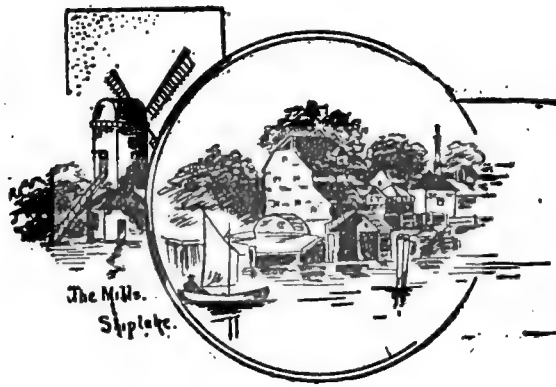
"You are dead for the gendarmes, Guillaume, for all the world except Loubette and me," I replied jestingly. But the words made a painful impression on him.

"It were perhaps the best thing that could happen to me, for all of us—if it were true," he rejoined, gloomily. But recovering himself quickly, he imparted to me his plan, which was to seek a home with some friends in the Talmond country. I made some inquiries as to his means of subsistence; but he was shy, and broke off the conversation abruptly, saying that he had still far to travel and that people were coming in sight along the road from Marans. He was right. We had scarcely time for a brief farewell and a hearty grasp of the hand when he was lost to sight in an adjoining thicket and I saw him no more.

But among the bodies of those shot by the gendarmerie in the slight rising that took place soon afterward in La Vendée, on the appearance of the Duchess de Berri, that of Guillaume Blaisot and of his brave sister, Loubette, were found side by side.

Jasper Ropher.





THE LIVING DEAD.

"WELL, of all the confoundedly dismal places, for a wait, this station annexes the biscuit!"

This was my impatient remark, when, on an unusually bleak night, in a more than ordinarily cold January, I found myself stranded upon the platform of Leytonside Junction, with two hours to drag through, before the coming of the next train to town.

Business connected with my calling—that of a commercial—had taken me to the obscure village, from which the Junction derived its name.

I was a traveller in biscuits, which perhaps had called forth my prior mentioned reference to the farinaceous article of diet, of which I was the purveyor.

The means of communication between Leytonside and the outer world were limited. I had proposed returning by a certain train; but a commercial "proposes" and a good customer "disposes"; as a consequence, I was driven by a heavily-fee'd, and slightly inebriated fly-man, at a break-neck speed, along the dreary, five-mile stretch which lay between the village and the junction, merely to undergo the vexation of seeing my train steam out of the station as I entered it.

In reply to my irritable query as to when was the next, the solitary official, who—like the gentleman immortalised in "The Yarn of the *Nancy Bell*" was—

> The cook and the captain bold,
> The mate of the *Nancy* brig,
> The bo'sun tight, and the midshipmite,
> And the crew of the captain's gig.

or in other words, was station-master, booking-clerk and porter combined—had replied politely: "The next up-train is twelve-thirty, sir!" which—seeing that the clock above my head pointed to half-past ten—scarcely required the deductive powers of a Sherlock Holmes to enable me to arrive at the period of my stay, with a tolerable degree of certainty. The prospect of a hundred and twenty minutes perambulation, up and down the dismal, wind-swept platform, only relieved from total darkness by the feeble light of a couple of ill-trimmed oil-lamps—or, worse still, a seat in the bare shed, open to the front, with a fire, now in the very throes of dissolution, called by an imaginative Railway Company, a "General Waiting-room" was anything but encouraging.

The only touch of relief to the dreariness of the picture—although to me, it emphasised its misery—was the station house, into which the elderly official had turned to enter, at the departure of the locomotive. My question arrested him on the threshold.

With the handle of the half-open door in his hand, he gave me the information I sought.

As he spoke, I caught a glimpse of the interior—a room, half kitchen, half parlour, with a glorious fire blazing in the brightly polished stove, and a swinging lamp suspended from the white ceiling, casting its light upon a couple of old-fashioned armchairs, which stood invitingly, beside the burning coals. Involuntarily, I uttered the impatient remark, with which this narrative begins, at the same time casting a yearning glance towards the vacant seats.

The man heard the one, and saw the other. With a hearty hospitality, which made me ashamed of my petulance, he threw open the door, and invited me to enter.

"If you're not too proud, sir," he said, "come inside and take a seat. You'll be a deal more comfortable here, than in the waiting room. You see, we don't get much passenger traffic, on this branch, except on market days, so"—a merry twinkle appearing in his eyes—"we saves the company's coals outside, and makes up for it in."

"No, I don't suppose you get many passengers," I replied, going back to his former remark, and seating himself with a sigh of relief, and thrusting my cold feet forward close to the cheery blaze. "In fact, yours must be a lonely sort of life, altogether, living all the year round, at an out-of-the-way spot like this. Why, there are not a dozen houses within five miles of you."

He shook his head negatively—a tender look creeping into his eyes, and lighting up the wrinkled, weather-beaten face.

"It 'ud be a lonely life for some people,' he said "but lor bless you, not for me. I've got all the company I want, and am as happy as the day is long. You're right about the houses, though—there's only eight 'tween this and the village—and they ain't very close. But so much the better, say I, and if you'd gone through what I have, sir, why I reckon you'd say so, too."

His face paled beneath his tan, and with his big red handkerchief, he hurriedly mopped the moisture, which had gathered in great drops upon his forehead as he spoke.

Evidently I had touched upon some chord of memory which affected him strongly.

He caught my glance of eager curiosity.

"You'd like to hear about it sir? It's only a page

out of a poor man's life, but it will serve to while away the time, so I'll tell it to you.

"Thankee kindly, sir. It's long since I had a cigar—a clay pipe and a bit o' twist is all you can get down here. I used to get one given me now and again, at one time, though. That's when I'm going to tell you about.

"After you, sir. Thankee.

"I haven't lived down in these sort o' places all my life, sir. No, in my time I've seen as much as most. But I'd better begin at the beginning—I could always tell a straight tale best.

"Well, I was born on the rails—so to speak—for my father was a railway-porter, and mother was taken bad one day in the porter's room, when, as he was busy, she'd brought him his dinner. Seeing it was so, 'twas nothing but natural but as I should take to father's calling, just as the young ducks follow the old 'uns to the water. He was foreman porter on the London and South-Western Railway, at a place down in Hampshire, and I got took on under him. As soon as I was big enough, I started at cleaning lamps and doing odd jobs, till I was made full porter, at fifteen shillings a week.

"The signalman's cottage was next door to ours, and when his daughter Mary was sixteen and I was twenty, we kept company. She was the handsomest gal for miles around, and as good as she was handsome.

"Though you mayn't think it, to look at me now, sir, I was a well-set up, likely lad, too, at that time; so though all the lads in the country-side made up to her, she wouldn't look at none but me.

"We'd no idea of getting married for a long time to come, for we were both pretty sensible; and though we didn't say so to each other, we knew that fifteen shillings a week might fill two mouths, but it would be a tight pinch when it had to fill three or four.

"However, a couple of years later, I was sent for to Waterloo, which, of course, meant a rise of pay, and a deal more in tips. Then I began to look about for a little house, and by-and-by, me and my sweet lass was married.

"I did the best I could, but there ain't much choice for a poor man, near Waterloo, and the little crib I took was a four-roomed house in a dingy court just off the York Road.

"I was very proud of it at first, but when it was all ready, and I got a letter to say as Mary was coming, I began to feel different. I thought of the little cottage down in the country she was leaving—with the jessamine and honeysuckle all about it, and the smell of the gilly flowers coming through the windows, and my heart misgave me, that she would be sick and sorry to leave it for this.

"I needn't have feared though, Mary never seemed to notice the dirt and dinginess around. To her, the little shanty was a palace, because as she said, I was there to keep her company.

"And when she come to me—why, sir, she seemed to have brought all the brightness of the country-side with her! Yes! the dirty, brown sparrows on the roof seemed to put on brighter feathers, and sing the same merry songs as the mavises and the finches in the hedge-rows down at home.

"Ah! we was very happy, we was, and more happier still, when a year had gone, and there came a third mouth to fill. A porter's life on a big station ain't all beer and skittles, standing about in wind, and rain, and fog-oftentimes, carrying your life in your hands, coupling and uncoupling, when it's as much as you can do, to keep your feet on the frosty rails, and with the coupling hooks feeling red-hot to the touch. Yes a railway-man's money is hard-earned, I can tell you, and there ain't too much of it, when it's all told.

"Not that I ever grumbled, come hail or shine, when I thought of my sweet wife, and the wee bit of a babe at home.

"And the sight of that home, when I got there, clean as a new pin, you could have ate your dinner off the flagged floor, with my slippers warming on the fender and a tasty supper waiting for me in the oven, why, sir, I clean forgot then, as I'd ever knowed, what fog, and snow, and cold was. But, there, I go rambling on, and time's flying! Time and money they both fly, don't they, sir?

"Things jogged along like this, for three years, an' more, just the same, except that two more little strangers come along to make life happier still.

"Then all at once, a thing happened, which seemed to squeeze all the joy out of our hearts, and scrunch it up in a ball, and throw it away.

"Small-pox broke out in the court. One poor soul took it, after that, huddled together as we was, there was no chance for the rest, and one after the other, many among the neighbours was carried out, some feet first to the graveyard, and others, headforemost to the hospital.

"At the first scare, I said to Mary: 'For goodness sake, lass, take the kids, and go right away down to Hampshire to your father's, then my mind will be easy about you!'

"But, lor bless your heart! she wouldn't hear of it.

"'What, and leave you, Jim?' says she. 'You, as might get took, and me never hear a word of it, till you was carried to the hospital, or—Oh, Jimmy, Jimmy!' and she broke out, a sobbing and a crying, which said—more plainer than words, what she feared.

"After that, she cried a bit, and I kissed and fondled her, and she dried her eyes, and went on firm as a rock.

"'No, Jim, I'll never leave you, never! But, Jim, dear,' slipping her soft arm round my neck, while a far-away sort of look crept up into her eyes, 'you never knows what may happen, women is more given to taking these things than men, who are out and about. So promise me this, dear, if I'm took with it, as you'll send me to the hospital right away, for the children's sake and your own.'

"'Don't speak so, my gal,' said I, 'I can't abear to think on it,' my voice sounding hoarse and strange, and a great chill settling round my heart.

"Yet she made me promise all the same.

"So she stopped, while as the days went on and the disease spread and spread, I went to my work in the morning, never knowing what I should see when I come home at night.

"'Coming events cast their shadows before,' I've heard said, but I don't believe it, sir; for, one day, I'd come home from my work, feeling more hopeful than I'd ever done for weeks, when what should I see, as I entered the court, but the awful hospital van a-drawed up in front of our door. The sight of it made me gasp for breath, and I stopped where I stood, watching it, sort o' fascinated like.

"You might, mayhap, have counted forty, then come a 'tramp—tramp' down the stairs, and something was carried out huddled up in blankets—a bundle from which a flushed face looked out at me, with a pair of heavy eyes fixed longingly, pityingly upon mine.

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"'Good Heavens! It's Mary!' I cried. 'Oh, my poor lass! My poor lass!' and giving a great sob, I rushed forward to clasp her in my arms. Even then, it was me and the children she thought of, and she waved me back.

"'No—no, Jim! You mustn't, dear—you mustn't! Keep away for the children's sake and your own.'

"'Give me one kiss, lass, one kiss afore they take you away!' I answered, struggling to reach her.

"But somebody held me tight, and the door was closed upon her, and the van was driven out of the court.

"The neighbours told me that she'd been took in the forenoon.

"They wanted to send for me, but she wouldn't hear of it. So she'd made all arrangements herself, hoping the van would come for her afore I got back, so that I'd be spared the pain of seeing her go.

"Somehow, from the first, I'd little or no hope of her getting better—still, every minute o' the day, I was round at the hospital, seeking news.

"She wouldn't let me see her, though I sent message after message, begging and imploring her to let me come to the bedside, if only for a moment. And each time I went, I'd come back to our little home, with the pain at my heart gnawing deeper and deeper.

"Then came a blessed change. It was, I think, the eighth day after she was took, I'd gone as usual for news, and they said as she'd taken a great change, and the danger was past.

"I could have dropped on my knees, and thanked the Lord, there and then. Think of it, sir! Getting better after all my fears.

"The people must have thought me mad, as I walked home, for I went along singing aloud, and stepping as if I walked on air.

"It was a dark, miserable sort o' day, and I know everything must have worn a dreary, dirty sort o' look—but to me, sir, the world had never seemed so bright and beautiful a place afore.

"Another week slipped by—but so quickly that it was passed afore I realised it; for I had been busy buying little odd things, to add to her comfort, when she came back.

"Then came a letter, as said my Mary was dead. I can feel the shock of it now—now, when nigh on thirty years have passed.

"She'd had a relapse, they said, and died sudden. If I wanted to see her buried, I must come that very night. She was coffined down already.

"What followed, was like a terrible dream. Somebody got me a black coat and gloves, and put a band of crape round my hat; and that night, I stood by an open grave. Into it a coffin was lowered, and upon the breast-plate I read her name.

"Those, who stood round, tried to soothe me with soft words of comfort, but I spurned them all, returning to my empty home, with a cold, stony feeling at my heart—a feeling that all the days which lay before me, could hold neither joy nor sorrow again.

"I might have done something desperate then, but for a kindly neighbour's work and words. She had taken charge of the little ones, and she brought them to where I sat, staring with dry eyes into the dying fire.

"'See, Jim,' she said; 'Her little ones—hers and yours. You are all they have to look to, now. Bear up for their sakes!'

"Bless her! I believe she saved my reason, for now the salt tears came thick and fast, and flinging myself upon my knees, with my arms around them, I prayed for the strength I so sorely needed.

"Three or four days dragged on, which I'd lived through in a hopeless, broken-hearted sort of way.

"When one night—sitting alone—with the children in bed—the fire low, and the lamp—which I'd left untrimmed—dying out—the stillness of the deserted court without was broken by a step—a step, like that of the dear one, who would never put foot to the ground again.

"Thinking it was one of the neighbours—yet wondering which one had the light step of my bonnie dead lass—I went to the window, and looked out into the darkness.

"For a second I saw nothing, then out of the murky night a familiar form took shape.

"It stole, stepping noiselessly now, towards the window. Nearer and nearer, and yet nearer it came, till nothing but the thin glass separated us.

"Then when our faces almost met—the living within and the dead without—I uttered an awful cry of dread, for I felt that I was gazing upon the white face of my buried wife.

"I staggered back from the window, with my flesh creeping, and every hair bristling upon my head, feeling that my hour had come. A second later and the thing came towards me with extended arms.

"Overcome with a terrible fear I reeled back—back till the wall stopped me, and I could get no further. Upon that I must have fainted. I can call to mind a misty sort o' feeling coming over me, and then a fall.

"When I came to myself I was on the floor, and the kind faces of the neighbours were around me, and someone was whispering in my ear something about a sad mistake, and that there was a great joy to come.

"In a dazed sort o' way, I was asking them what they meant, when something betwixt and between a cry of joy and a sob came from behind the rest, followed by someone—a woman—springing to my side, and clasping me in her arms—the arms, whose touch I'd never expected to feel again.

"Yes, you're right, sir; it was Mary, my wife, who'd come back alive and well, after all.

"My girl had begun to mend so fast, after they told me, that they'd moved her into another ward, but in the hurry, forgot to take her name from the bed's head. Well, another patient, the same day, took Mary's place and it was she, poor soul, who died.

"But we'd both had enough of London slums, and I'd managed to do the superintendent a good turn once, so I persuaded him to get me shifted down here, and here we've been ever since, sir.

"Now you can understand what I meant, when I said, 'the less houses, the better for me.' They say, 'God made the country, and man the town,' sir, and I agree with 'em.

"Hallo! That's your train signalled! How the time has gone, to be sure! Thankee, sir, I'll keep 'em to smoke on Sunday.

"Come along, and I'll give you your ticket.

"Good gracious, lass! you most knocked your old man off his pins!

"Yes, the chicks are all right, never made a sound after you put them to bed.

"She means my daughter's youngsters, sir, who lives in the village, but the missus has 'em here most of the time.

"Beg pardon, but this is Mary, sir, or as I call her sometimes: 'The Living Dead.'"

Hubert Bartlett.

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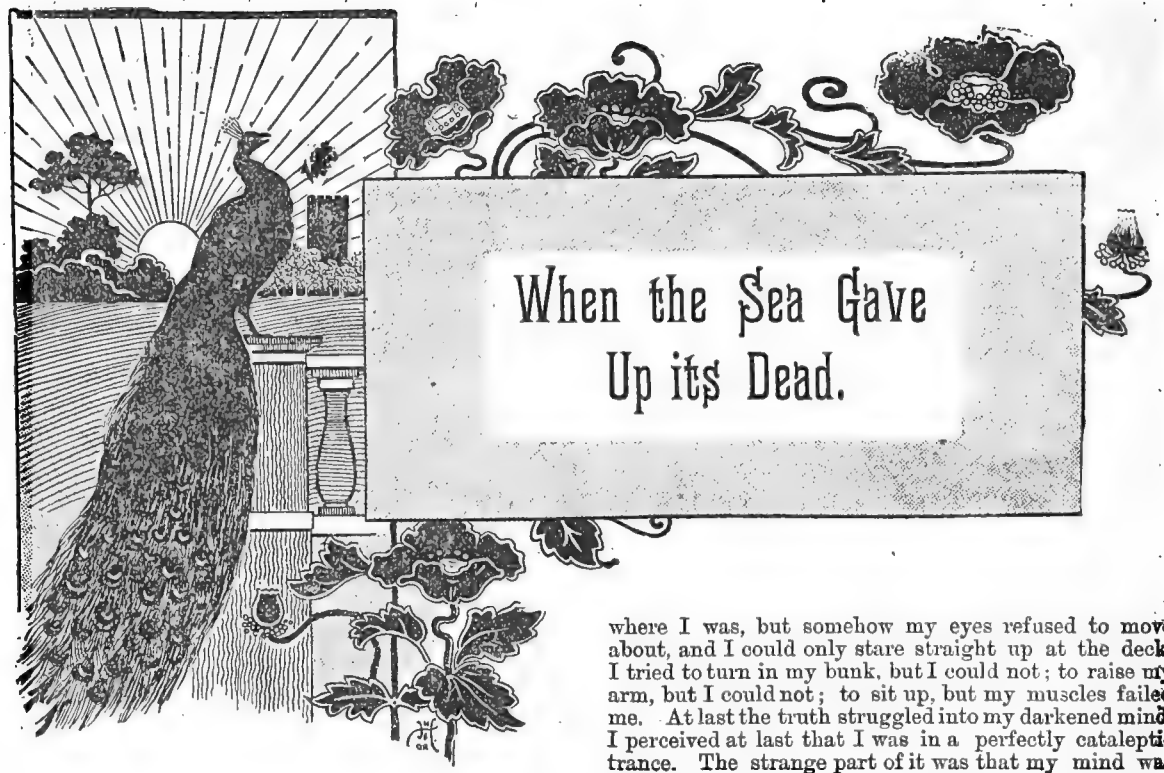


When the Sea Gave Up its Dead.

It was in my twenty-sixth year that my ship, the *Osprey*, owned by Fowler Brothers, was chartered to go to San Francisco for wheat. We arrived there safely, loaded wheat, and soon were outside of the Golden Gate heading for home. Everything went smoothly, and nothing occurred to forewarn me of the terrible adventure the future had in store for me.

We were to the southward of Valparaiso when I fell ill. It was a kind of faintness that would suddenly and without warning come upon me, so that I often fell on the deck and lay there until someone could come to my assistance. This continued without my getting much worse until we got down off the Magellan Straits, in the latitude of Cape Pillar, or thereabouts.

One day, a gloomy forbidding day, such as the mariner often meets with down there, I had the afternoon watch, and was superintending one of my men who was fixing a ratline in the weather mizzen-topmast rigging. The fellow was very clumsy, to say the least of it. I got annoyed watching his awkwardness; more annoyed, in fact, than was warranted, I think, now that I look back. But I was growing more and more irritable every day, which was probably owing to my fainting spells.

Suddenly I became so excited that I jumped into the mizzen rigging, and was into the top in a trice. I was about to pull the fellow away from his job when a fit came on. A sudden mist clouded my eyes. My senses left me; I reeled and fell from the top to the deck. In my descent I struck once or twice, which caused me to turn over, with the result that I fell on my head.

When I recovered consciousness I was lying in a bunk in the hospital. Still, there was a thick mist before my eyes. I could, indeed, see everything so as to recognise where I was, but somehow my eyes refused to move about, and I could only stare straight up at the deck. I tried to turn in my bunk, but I could not; to raise my arm, but I could not; to sit up, but my muscles failed me. At last the truth struggled into my darkened mind. I perceived at last that I was in a perfectly cataleptic trance. The strange part of it was that my mind was almost as active as ever. I knew all that was going on about me, and I felt an overwhelming terror at my possible fate.

It was soon made known to me. The Captain entered my room. I could hear indistinctly, as if it were afar off, his footstep on the deck. Then the steward also came in. I heard them consulting together, and both came to the conclusion that I was dead; that my neck was broken by the fall.

"Tell Sails to come in and take his measure. We must bury him to-morrow while the fine weather lasts," I heard the Captain say, and presently the sail-maker came in and measured me for the last hammock I should ever sleep in. I could not feel him, but I knew by his motions what he was doing.

I will not describe how they laid me out on the cabin table and left me there, while Sails, close by, made my shroud. Stitch, stitch, stitch went his needle, seeming to enter into my brain every time instead of the thick canvas. I can distinctly remember that while I lay there the steward tried to close my eye-lids, but they flew up every time and left me the poor consolation of seeing the preparations for my doom.

At last all was finished. The canvas was spread on the deck and I was laid in it. Then the sailmaker began to stitch me up. He had stitched all up but my face, when I heard him say he had lost his knife. A rigid search was made everywhere, but it could not be found, so Sails returned to work, and all that time I was thinking in my dull way what fools they were for not looking into my shroud for the lost knife.

As I afterward learned it was next day at noon that I was carried on deck and laid on a plank, preparatory to being shot overboard. The men one by one took a look at my face, and then it was covered up.

The burial service was read by the Captain, there was a little delay, and then the plank was tilted, and I shot into the bitter cold water off the Diego Ramirez. It must have been the shock that brought me to my senses for, as I sank down, dragged lower by the shot at my feet, I felt my feeling and action return. At the same moment my right hand, released from its dread inertia, grasped what I instantly knew to be a knife. Mechanically I forced the blade and ripped my canvas shroud so that the shot fell and I began to rise to the surface.

In a few seconds, I suppose, although it seemed years I opened my eyes—for it is a curious fact that while I lay in a state of coma they remained open, yet when my feelings returned with the shock I closed them at once—and saw once more the light of day, which I had never expected to see again.

I was an excellent swimmer, and had soon regained my breath and cast from me the canvas which impeded my movements.

Then I looked around over the waters, and saw that my miraculous escape had been all for nothing. The ship, looking like a great swan, was a long way off, getting smaller and smaller even as I looked.

There arose from my lips a frenzied oath against a providence that had abandoned me thus, but almost immediately afterwards, as if to rebuke me for my wickedness, I noticed a piece of wreckage floating towards me.

Hope once more filled my breast, and I swam toward the piece of deck-house, as it proved to be, and clambering on top threw myself on my face for very wretchedness.

Alone on the wide ocean, a piece of wood the only thing between me and death, dazed and weak from my last terrible experience, what else could I do but weep? Soon I began to feel an intense hunger. By the lowest calculation I must have been comatose for three days, so for that time I had had no nourishment.

The thick mist that suddenly came down satisfied my thirst, but there was nothing to eat. I nearly went crazy as the day wore on.

At last night fell and added the terrors of the blackness of darkness to the pangs of hunger. I could never tell the horrors of that first night. It was a wonder I was not stark, staring mad when day broke.

The second day passed like the first. Nothing to eat, something to moisten my lips, but no sail in sight. The third day broke with an angry sky and angrier sea, and I saw that before the day closed a Cape Horn gale would be raging with its attendant sleet and cold. I trembled then, for, even though I was almost dead and quite without hope, I wanted to live.

By noon the sea had risen tremendously, and it was with great difficulty that I managed to keep on my raft. By nightfall the gale was raging fiercely, and I was expecting every moment to be engulfed in one of the terrible abysses into which my raft slipped constantly.

This was the most awful night I ever spent—worse even than when I lay to all appearances dead on the cabin table of the *Osprey*. The flying spoondrift cut me to the bone. The great waves rolled their crested, phosphorescent heads high above me, who, sank in a black abyss, heard the gale shrieking overhead. I felt soon that it could not last much longer. Numbed and weak as I was, I clung to my refuge with the energy of desperation, and waited bitterly for death.

Finally an immense wave, higher than all that had gone before, raised its wild head and rolled down on me.

My time had come. I was swept like a child from my raft and carried on the crest of the monster, as I supposed, to death. But once again the hand of Providence was stretched out to save me. I was dashed with inconceivable violence against something solid as a rock. Ropes were floating all around me. I seized several, and then swooned.

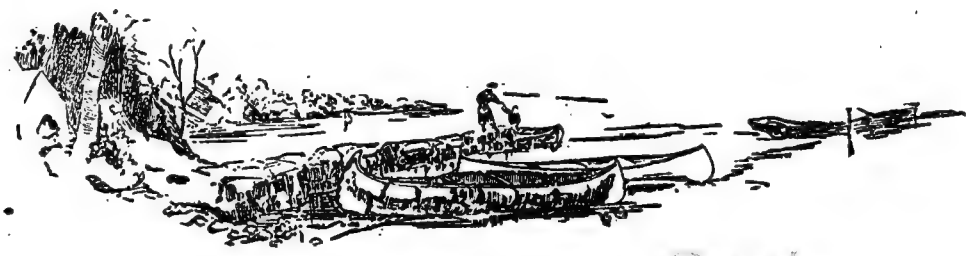
I awoke and recognised the old hospital of the *Osprey*. Then I thought my burial and subsequent adventures were all a wandering fancy, and that I had never left the hospital. But I was soon undeceived.

A kind face bent over me, and I saw once more the features of my good captain. He would not permit me to speak all that day, but on the next I was allowed to relate my story, which I did in a weak and quavering voice, I can assure you. Then the Captain told me that, after burying me, as they thought, they had kept on their course for two days, when they encountered a heavy head gale, which drove them back on their course again. They shipped a terrible sea, which carried away boats and houses forward, but it was the last exertion of the gale, for after that it died away.

When the waist was sufficiently clear of water to enable the men to walk there, they had discovered my body entangled in ropes lying in the lee scupper. At first they thought my corpse had been washed aboard again, as has been several times done, but on lifting me up they saw unmistakable signs of life, and with great awe and wonder carried me into the cabin.

As to my comatose sleep, the captain said he had never seen anything more like death. He had doubted if the most skilful doctors could have discovered any life in me. He was confident my neck had been broken.

J. C. Browne.



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SECOND INSTALMENT.

THE RED MEN OF THE DUSK

A SEVENTEENTH CENTURY ROMANCE.

By JOHN FINNEMORE.

SUMMARY.

GEOFFREY HEATHCOTE, who, for political reasons, is apprehensive of pursuit, leaves Butley Croft, in Worcestershire, and makes for the heart of Wales, where he has expectations of finding a sure refuge. Travelling among the Welsh mountains, Geoffrey narrowly escapes being trapped by a gang of thieves, and on a later occasion he joins in a fight against the same gang. Geoffrey then falls into the company of a hot-headed Welshman, who picks a quarrel. They fight, and Geoffrey, who has found more than his match, is saved by a woman, who is grateful to the refugee for having saved the life of her child. Suspicious characters gather round Geoffrey.

CHAPTER III.

My acquaintance whistled as his eye fell upon Whitesock whose coat shone like satin in the light of the bogwood torch my hostess was carrying, for the night was falling rapidly.

"Dewi Sant!" he cried. "What horse iss this?"

His hands were soon running over her in a manner which showed that he knew what he was about.

"Ay, what bones!" he said. "And iss she so fast as she iss pretty?"

"More so," I replied; "but I should advise you not to handle her too freely. She will not take much of that from anyone but me."

As Whitesock now turned her head, and began to move uneasily, he let her alone, and stood biting his finger, and staring at her. I shook hands with the good woman of the cottage, gave a piece of money to the little boy, and swung myself into the saddle. I felt that my sword was buckled tightly, the hilt handy, and the butts of my pistols easily within reach.

I had no clear evidence for distrusting my companions, but I did so heartily, and for that very reason was determined to keep an eye upon them. I felt certain that the girls in grey had been packed off at sight of them, and I felt also that they were of another and a more dangerous class than the Egyptian and her dirty rabble.

For a couple of miles we moved but slowly, for the road was villainous underfoot. Indeed, my companion's nimble little pony, bred upon these mountain tracks, made better way than Whitesock, who was quite at a loss among the rolling pebbles and clumsy pieces of rock that littered the way.

Then the path improved, running over clear mountain turf, and, turning a spur of the hill, we rode into the light of the rising moon, now nearly at the full, and swinging low against a distant hill.

The harper was trotting beside my companion, and at intervals they exchanged a few words in a low tone. A turn of the road brought the moon at our back, and I was surprised to see a shadow fall between Whitesock and the pony. I glanced quickly round. Immediately behind us was marching a bareheaded, barefooted fellow with a pike over his shoulder, following with noiseless tread, and his eyes bent on the ground. The other two took no notice of him, but continued to talk quietly.

"Who is this man following us?" said I.

"Oh," said the bard, waving his hand, "it iss nothing. A friend to me."

I slipped my hand down to the off holster, dropped it on a pistol butt, and gently drew it to full cock. The action was well oiled, and worked smoothly, and amid the rattling of the horses' feet the soft click was, as I thought, unheard.

So far as I could see I was the only one in the party possessed of firearms, and to that extent I held them at advantage. I glanced again, and gave an involuntary start. A second pikeman was trotting at the side of the first. How or from where the fellow came I could not divine. If spirits of the dead had been rising to join us they could not have come more silently, or held their way with softer footfall.

He also had no other head covering than a shock of hair, and his feet were bare. Both had that bounding movement which betokens surprising strength and activity, and I

scarcely knew what to think of the company into which I had so strangely fallen. That they were honest I had great doubts, and I had a mind to give Whitesock a hint and leave them but that the road had now fallen very bad again.

Marching with my beard upon my shoulder, as the saying goes, I saw the third pikeman arrive. Just as we passed a great boulder lying on the edge of the road he glided from its shadow and fell in at the rear. He was as like his fellows as one bean resembles others.

Not a word or sign was exchanged among any of them, and with the queerness and odd danger of it all a cold sweat came out upon me. This was another business altogether to keeping an eye for a few miles upon the bard and the dwarf. Our path now lay along the lee of a hill which cast a dark shadow over the rough, broken road.

Without looking round the tall man gave a shrill whistle. I half drew my pistol, but the signal was not aimed against me. At a flash the three pikemen sprang forward, running swiftly and silently, and flew on ahead, the dwarf running with them. I urged Whitesock on, impelled to follow them and see what was their object, but I was compelled to rein in almost instantly. I should only have lamed the poor lass among the loose cluttered rocks, and then things would have been at a worse pass still.

"Come, come," said my companion, who had sent his pony along with me and drawn rein when I did; "indeed you are not treating me fairly at all. To cock your pistol and hold it ready when we are riding together so friendly as possible iss not showing any trust at all. Do you think that I would set those boys against you when you had a good chance to kill me this afternoon, and did not do it. To be sure, I would not. And, indeed, I am wanting no help against any one man in this world," he added proudly.

To these remarks I had no answer to make, and we rode for some time in silence. The dwarf had left his harp behind, and my companion fingered it as he rode, now and again humming or trying over an air as if he had forgotten my existence.

The young lady and her attendants ran strongly in my mind. How far had they got ahead? What was the meaning of that little elf and the three nimble fellows running forward like greyhounds? When we reached the top of the long rise and came into the moonshine again I found to my joy that the road was clean underfoot, and touched Whitesock with my heel. She broke into her long, easy trot, the little pony at her side stretching away at the gallop, and we went perhaps three miles before we were checked again.

A little more picking of the way, and, on turning a corner, behold a light, shining as from a casement, half a mile ahead. It was the inn, and, as we rode up, I glanced eagerly through the uncurtained window. In front of a huge peat fire stood the dwarf looking round with a spiteful smile upon three or four frightened looking country fellows who were seated upon a long settle.

I drew a pistol and fired it over their heads.

As I gazed, one of them rose and went towards the door. The dwarf made a gesture as if ordering him back, and the man returned and sat down without dispute. There was no sign of the forms for which I looked, but they might easily be elsewhere, nor could I see any trace of the pikemen. My companion sprang from his pony and ran eagerly into the house. Upon the other side of the yard was an open door, and inside a lantern dimly burning.

Without dismounting I turned Whitesock towards it and thrust in my head. It was the stable, empty but for two ponies, and those, as I saw at a glance, larger than the animals for which I was searching.

I drew the right hand rein and rode softly back to the highway. I felt perfectly certain that the pikemen were somewhere in front of me with their prey, and after going gently for a hundred yards over a soft, muddy piece I gave Whitesock her head.

For a single field's length from the inn the land was inclosed, then the road was as usual, over open mountain, and here the smooth, springy turf ran to the edge of the way. Turning Whitesock to the turf away she went at a gallop, her head down, her big, keen, bright eye every yard of the path.

The moon was now well up, and poured like day through the thin, clean, frost upright in the saddle, left searching o mare, and kept a look-out in front and

I had gone thus for perhaps a mile when I fancied that I heard a faint sound as of a clinking hoof. I pulled up at once and sat listening. It came again, and clearer still now that the soft thud of Whitesock's feet upon the turf no longer filled my ear. But it came from a point to the left of the road, from a direction where a sharply rising hill thrust itself so far into the sky that the moon had only just cleared it, the rim of the yellow disc resting on the crown of the ascent.

Clink, clink again—certainly the rattle of ponies' feet over a stony patch, and now there rose straight up against the moon a bunch of figures. They were in view a mere instant, just as they crossed the ridge. It seemed as if the hill thrust them out, then drew them in again. I never doubted for an instant who they were, and turned Whitesock up the rise, which she climbed with easy stride.

As we neared the top of the hill I sprang down and led her a little to one side of the stony patch which I saw shining white before us. The other side of the hill lay in full moonlight, and, peering over the crest, I found myself gazing down a long, gentle slope, the dark patch of moving figures some distance away. I climbed into the saddle again and went down upon them at a swift canter. As I drew near I saw two ponies, each with a female figure seated upon it, one ragged pikeman walking between them holding a rein of each pony, the other two marching on either side.

With the advantage of my horse and weapons I had but little uneasiness as to driving the rascals off, but, as it happened, the task turned out very simple, for they were singing or rather chanting a mournful, wailing air as they marched, and I closed upon them unnoticed, Whitesock moving as lightly as a hare over the soft, springy turf. The man on the right hand carried a pike on either shoulder as his fellow between the ponies had both hands occupied. I therefore marked the left hand pikeman and drove the mare down on him at a swinging gallop.

I was within twenty yards of them before they turned their heads. They raised a cry of triumph, thinking doubtless that I was the tall man, their leader. The cry was hardly out of their throats when Whitesock struck the pikeman like a thunderbolt and hurled him a dozen yards, her knees as she rose to the gallop picking him clean off his feet.

At a touch of the rein she wheeled round, but in that mere instant much had happened.

The fellow in the middle had dropped the reins and leapt for his pike.

The captives had risen instantly to the situation, and made a dash for freedom, and I turned to confront two sturdy fellows, their pikes ready for action, and to see the ponies scouring away to the right to regain the road.

As I had no fancy for pinking Whitesock's satin coat upon those keenly whetted points I rode round them and followed the retreating couple. I looked over my shoulder to find the spearmen bounding after me like greyhounds, and the third man slowly getting to his feet. I drew a pistol and fired it over their heads. They took the hint, and drew off at once. In three minutes I was up with the flying figures.

"Do not press your animals too hard," I cried. "You are safe now, I think. Those fellows are not following us."

They drew rein, greatly to the relief of the panting little creatures under them, and we went at an easy pace up the last stretch of the long slope.

"You have come to our rescue once more, and we thank you again and again," said the nearer rider. "We seem fated to get into difficulties on this journey."

"It is traveller's luck," said I, "and in these unsettled days one cannot be surprised at at any length to which the daring of these rogues and footpads carries them. But who were these men?"

"I am not entirely sure," she replied, "but I believe we have fallen into the danger against which—" she paused for a moment, then added—"the danger of which we heard in the town."

"You were very kind," said I, "and I see that you had great grounds for that of which you spoke. I do not see your man. Has anything happened to him?"

"No," she replied, "we left him behind this morning. He was still suffering from the ill-effects of yesterday's adventure, and I bade him remain and rest for a day or two; and, besides, a packet had not arrived which we expected, and he will stay for that."

"This does not seem a safe country to travel alone," I remarked.

"Siani and I have travelled it scores of times," she returned; "it has always been perfectly lonely and safe. These men have made their appearance altogether of late."

I asked as to the manner in which they had been attacked, and found that they had been set upon near the inn with such skill and suddenness that resistance was impossible. No harm had been offered them, nor had anything been taken from them, but the pistols, and Siani had lost her knife.

"This does not seem like common thieves," said I. "They would not forego such an opportunity for plunder. But you saw the leader of them. He was sitting in that cottage when you appeared in the doorway, and the dwarf rogue, who was one of the party attacking you, was seated between us."

"And were you there?" she said. "I saw some figures about the fire but the light was so bad that I could distinguish nothing clearly."

I narrated my adventures of the day, and both listened attentively.

We had by this time reached the road and were marching steadily forward. The place for which I was bound lay a day's journey beyond the inn which I had lately left. It was clear, however, that my companions knew the country well, and doubtless they were pushing on now for other and safer quarters, so I moved contentedly with them.

"There is some noise," said Siani in her odd-sounding English.

We drew rein at once and heard the clatter of hoofs pounding along the road behind us.

"It sounds as if we are pursued," said I; "ride quickly on, and I will check them and then follow you."

"Nay," said the young lady, "let us ride faster."

"You cannot ride fast enough to escape," said I; "those horses are fresh by the galloping, and your ponies are nearly used up now."

"And you also have been travelling all day," she said.

"You do not know Whitesock," I laughed, patting the good mare's neck. "Besides, I am quite safe. Do not fear on that score. I do not believe they have pistols, and I will take care they do not close with me."

"They may have mine," said the young lady.

"And if they have," I returned, "mine carry twice as far and a heavier ball. I can turn them easily enough. But pray ride on. We are losing precious time. If any accident should happen you will have but a poor start as it is."

Siani now added her entreaties to mine and at the same time flung her cloak about her young mistress.

I then saw for the first time that the lady had lost her cloak.

"No, no," she said. "Siani——"

"Stay," I broke in, "the matter is easily arranged. Siani shall wrap herself in my cloak and leave me the freer for my work."

I stripped off my cloak, tossed it to the waiting woman, who wrapped it snugly round her in a couple of turns, and away they went.

The moonlight shone in the bright, dark eyes and pale, beautiful face turned back towards me as they rode off, and I waved my hat in gay confidence.

A man came out of an outhouse with a lantern in his hand.

CHAPTER IV.

I MEET OWAIN VAUGHAN.

I TURNED Whitesock and moved gently towards the approaching horsemen in order to give as much ground as possible to the fugitives, but to my surprise the sound of hoofs had died away.

I pulled up and sat listening for a moment, and heard them again. The riders had stopped to water their horses at a little stream which I remembered passing some distance back. This did not seem very much like a pursuit, and I cantered sharply down towards them to settle the matter.

At thirty yards distance I checked Whitesock and challenged the two horsemen coming up the hill. They halted at once and called upon me in the language of the country. Perceiving they were not the men I expected, I spoke to them in English, and advanced in their direction, but they, wheeling their horses round, and clapping in their spurs, returned down the hill at full speed.

"'Tis a false alarm," thought I, trotting back, well pleased at the outcome of the affair. "They are two fellows who have escaped from the inn and got to the nags I saw in the stable."

I pushed on rapidly to regain my companions, but I was not to do so, for I fell into a mistake easy to be made among such rude tracks as I was following. But a few hundred yards from the spot where we had parted, the chief road took a sudden bend to the right and seemed to disappear down a narrow gully, yet straight on ran a road, white in the moonlight and, to be sure, no one would have any suspicion that in following it he was going directly out of his way and merely heading for a lonely farm far among the hills.

This was what I did, and on I went for three or four miles, thinking to see the ponies at every turn of the road, yet seeing nothing.

When I became convinced that I had missed them in some fashion, for at the pace I had ridden I knew that they could not be before me. I was puzzled what to do. I still felt certain that I was following the main road, for I had ridden past the mouth of the gully into which it turned without a glance aside, and after a little thought I could see no better plan than to pursue my journey. Three miles further the road turned directly into one of those narrow valleys with steeply sloping sides, such as the Welsh call a *cwm*, and ran up the middle of it. The sides of the valley were dotted with sheep, and I looked eagerly forward for some habitation.

Soon I saw a light at the head of the glen where the hills seemed to close in upon either side. I came nearer and saw something white stretching across the road. I cantered up and found myself staring across a gate into a farmyard, where the road abruptly ended and, facing me, a long low white-washed house through whose naked windows a bright fire-light was streaming.

At this moment a man came out of an outhouse with a lantern in his hand. I hailed him and he came towards the gate. Luckily he had a little English and at once told me where I had gone wrong, assuring me that it was no uncommon misfortune, so easily was the road missed at that point.

He hospitably desired me to come in and stay, and knowing that Whitesock had earned her rest, and it would be better to make a fresh start with the daylight. I thanked him, and rode through the gate which he unbarred.

He led the way back to the building from which he had come, and helped me to attend to the mare, and then led the way to the house. The door opened directly to the kitchen, where a cheerful fire was blazing and his wife and two or three children were gathered round it.

The universal and cheerful hospitality of the Welsh was busied at once to make me comfortable. I was placed in a chair in the snug chimney-corner, and the good wife at once set a small round table at my elbow, and arranged food upon it. No one had any English except my host, and his was not so fluent but that occasionally we arrived at cross purposes. Still, when we came to a fix, we tried back and started again, and in the end managed to find where we were.

"Nont y Boyn," he said, on hearing of my destination, "I am taking sheep to-morrow, and must to go that way. We shall go, the two, now."

This was welcome news to me when I found he was bound to a spot within a few miles of my journey's end, and I gladly agreed to accompany him.

The next morning I arose to find that the fine weather of the past few days had departed, and that a sharp, sleety drizzle was falling. As I stood looking at it through the window of the great kitchen, my host joined me.

"Where is the big coat with you?" said he. "Spoil the fine clothes, this weather," and he rubbed his finger, smilingly, up and down the silver lace of my riding suit.

"Oh!" I replied, "perhaps it will get better soon."

"No," said he, decisively, "it shall go worse and worse through the day. I am sure of it. But, no matter, I will find to you a coat."

He said a few words in Welsh, and his little boy ran out of the house to return in five minutes laden with a great blue-grey homespun coat, quite new and of a texture to withstand the fiercest storm that ever blew. He explained that it was borrowed from his shepherd, who would not be going from home that day.

At once upon seeing it I formed a design of purchasing it, as I knew not now when I should see my cloak again and the shepherd was fetched to strike a bargain. This was easily

done to his great satisfaction, and I rode away that morning across the hills fenced as securely from the biting, driving sleet as if I had been in a castle.

Our progress was very slow, since it was timed to the pace of the slowest sheep, and when we came to the hamlet where my guide was to deliver his flock, the dusk was falling.

There was no inn at the place, but one of the houses provided some accommodation for travellers and I determined to stay rather than push on for Nant y Bryn in the darkness. My kind friend spent the night there also, and the next morning we parted, with hearty expressions of goodwill on both sides. He had given me such particular direction for finding my way that I doubted not but an hour's ride would see the end of my journey.

I had gone some two miles on my way, and was crossing a patch of broken, heathy land, when I saw another horseman some distance away to my left. He was following a road which gradually ran to meet mine, and step by step we drew nearer, like men marching down the arms of a great V.

He was a young man, looking much of my own age, riding a tall, thin, black horse of no great quality, handsomely dressed, and carrying a sword, but as far as I could see, no pistols. He looked me over with an air of great superiority for which I could see no grounds, till I remembered myself of the coarse grey coat I was wearing.

We reached the meeting-place of the two roads within half-a-dozen yards of each other, he in front. He spoke to me in Welsh and I bade him good-morning.

"You are English, then," said he coldly.

"I am," said I, "and have no Welsh."

All the time his eye was running over my mare, and he drew his horse away to put the whole width of the road between us.

"Does he take me for a highwayman?" I thought, and I smiled, for my combination of coarse grey coat and a nag under me fit for a prince certainly pointed in that direction, had we been on a more travelled route.

In this smile I managed to displease him, for it timed with a false step of his sorry horse, and he thought I laughed at him.

The colour shot up into his thin, dark, handsome face, and his big, black eyes flashed at me fiercely. I looked before me as if I had observed nothing, and now saw, a mile in front, a large house standing halfway up a steep slope.

"Is that Nant y Bryn?" I asked.

"It is," said he, "and who are you travelling this countryside, who do not know Nant y Bryn?"

"A stranger," I replied, "from afar."

"From what part of England?" he demanded, abruptly.

"From Worcestershire," said I, by no means relishing the tone he adopted toward me.

"Worcestershire," he repeated, with an increase of bitterness in his tone. "And what may be your business at Nant y Bryn, my good fellow from Worcestershire?"

"You take a strange way of your own at getting at a stranger's business," I replied. "A little more civility would not come amiss."

"And who art thou, to teach me how I should speak to an English hog?" he cried, hotly. "Dost wish to taste my whip?" And he threatened me with his riding cane.

"Why," said I, "this is a storm all about nothing. I have given you no offence, and to call names and talk of whips is hardly the thing between gentlemen."

"Gentlemen, Greycoat," sneered my companion. "Pray what dost thou mean? Did anyone ever see a gentleman in such a churl's dress?"

"Easily," said I. "You have for one. I know not who you may be, and care not; but under this grey coat runs as good blood as your own, and I advise you to drop this hectoring tone."

My companion reined in his horse and extended his hand towards me.

"Is it possible," he said in a quiet bitter voice, "that I have had the luck to drop across a man from Worcestershire who has a gentleman's right to wear a sword?"

"Certainly," I replied. "And one perfectly willing to use it upon cause shown."

"Enough said," he answered, and dismounted. He turned to me and raised his hand. "Before Heaven," he declared, "it is ample reason for me that you are English and of your county. I want no other inducement to spill your best heart's blood."

Now, though his words were very foolish and vapouring, yet it was plain that he was deadly in earnest, and I came down, and led Whitesock to an ash sapling behind a thick patch of brushwood.

"This is a cheerful country for a traveller," thought I. "If I am to fight for my life every day because I am English, I wonder of how many swords I shall run the gauntlet."

"Why are you hiding your horse away like that?" he asked as I returned.

"Content you," I replied. "It is for your benefit. If she should see us at close quarters, nothing would prevent her from running in and trampling you underfoot."

"Why, that is like a dog," he cried.

"She has the sense of one, and more," I returned, stripping off my coat. But my companion lingered for a moment.

He had passed, at a flash, as is the custom of these people, to another set of feelings upon my speech.

"I fear I have made a mistake," he said.

"You have," said I, "a great mistake, to treat me as you did. But you have gone too far with it to turn back."

"Who wishes to do so?" he screamed rather than spoke in reply, and his former bitterness returned with ten-fold heat. We took ground upon a triangular patch of turf where two roads forked apart, and he led the attack with much skill and fire.

But after a minute of the swift interchange of thrust and parry I felt but little uneasiness. He was not to be compared for an instant with his countryman of yesterday, and furthermore though well trained to his weapon, he lacked experience in the point where it is most needed, in the use of it in deadly combat.

It is one thing to play with the buttoned foil where a hit or miss is a matter for laughter or a trifling wager; quite another to know that a terrible penalty will be given or exacted for a false stroke, a slip, a miscalculation.

I knew this by observation of the dreadful pitch to which his nerves were strung; his mouth was a round hole through which his breath came in whistling gasps, his face was streaked with red and white, and his eyes burned like fires in his head.

I have seen a fellow fighting in sheer fright for his life look much the same, but there was no fear about my opponent. It was the vivid imagination in which these people abound, painting before his mind that which a deadly combat means to the last stroke and furthest reach of the picture.

We English people are lacking in this perhaps, but as by the same lack we keep cool and watch the other man's point with nothing to distract us, in the end we are the gainers.

At the end of three minutes there had been much clashing of swords, thrusting and parrying, but neither of us had received a scratch. As to my share of the encounter, it had been confined strictly to the defensive. I was now certain he could not, except by an accident, pass my guard, and I charged my play carefully, aiming to disarm him.

But I had to be very wary, for he was agile as a panther and, his blood boiling savagely within him, would have spitted me with the best will in the world. I was pressing upon him steadily, when our combat was interrupted in a fashion oddly the counterpart of my encounter of the previous day. A sudden weight was flung upon my sword arm and I felt myself gripped from behind. Catching me

all unawares at a moment when I was balancing myself to reach forward, I slipped and fell to one knee. My opponent bounded forward, too furious to see more than the chance that was offered him, when a female figure leapt between us, crying: "No, no, Owain! It is he! Do not strike!"

Owain checked himself, dropped the point of his sword, and stood motionless. I rose and bowed to my young lady of the road.

CHAPTER V.

Nant y Bryn.

"I did not recognise you," she said breathlessly; "I saw nothing but Owain for the moment. He looked dreadful. He is my brother."

"Blue and silver," said Owain. "A bright b y mare with one white stocking. It has been a mistake indeed. Sir, I own myself in the wrong and ask your pardon."

So handsome an apology cleared every score between us, and we shook hands heartily. At this instant an old gentleman with silvery hair came round the clump of hollies behind us, saying as he came:

"Where are you, Enid? Where have you run? Ay, ay," he continued as he came forward; "What is this? Two young fellows with jackets off and drawn swords, and no breath to spare between t em. Pray, Owain, who is this stranger with whom you have been fighting?"

"I do not know," said Owain.

"Come, sir, who are you?" demanded the old gentleman, turning briskly upon me. "You smile, do you, and truly there is something familiar in it. Declare yourself."

"Well, uncle," said I; "you ought to discover something familiar about your nearest relation."

"So you are," he cried, "I see it now, Geoffrey Heathcote."

"At your service, uncle," I replied.

"It is ten years since I saw you last," said my uncle, welcoming me effusively, "and it is not easy at a glance to see the lad of fourteen in the young fellow of four-and-twenty. But you are welcome, indeed, to Nant y Bryn. These, also, are of my name and family, Owain and Enid Vaughan," he continued, introducing the young lady and her brother, "but how you came point to point with Owain, at such short notice, hot as he is, passes me altogether."

"Say nothing of it, Sir Arthur," broke in Owain Vaughan. "I was in the wrong, and I beg to thank Master Heathcote for the great help he has rendered my sister within the past two days."

"So you are he, too, nephew," said my uncle. "Well, well, how queerly things turn out. But we'll get home and you shall tell me all the news."

I fetched Whitesock, and we moved up the road together towards the house, talking of Butley Croft and Worcestershire affairs.

My uncle, Sir Arthur Vaughan, was my father's half-brother. My grandfather was twice married, first to Margaret Lathrope of a neighbouring family, secondly, to Letitia Vaughan, a Welsh lady.

Of each marriage there was one son, and, as my father did not marry until late in life, Sir Arthur had lived many years at Butley Croft on the footing of heir-apparent.

"No, no, Owain! It is he! Do not strike!"

Not long after my birth, his maternal grandfather died, Sir Lewis Vaughan, of Nant y Bryn, and as his mother was an only child, Arthur Heathcote departed for Wales, took the maternal inheritance and name, and was lost to Worcestershire.

My father joined the King's forces and was killed in an attack of the Parliament troops upon a fortified house in Warwickshire, into which a number of Royalists had thrown themselves; my mother died within two years afterwards and I had been left to the care of my grandfather, who lived to a very advanced age. He had now been dead some years and practically I had been master of Butley Croft since I was of any age capable of understanding a little of affairs.

As we walked on, the narrowness of the road parted us into couples, and my uncle lagged a little behind.

"By your appearing in this sudden and secret fashion, nephew," said he, "I judge that you are flying from something."

"You have hit it exactly, uncle," I returned. "It is the old cause."

"It is so?" said Sir Arthur. "What's on foot now?"

"You must know," I began, "what excitement and uneasiness are prevailing throughout the country at present. There are many who believe that the power of the Parliament army is running to a close, and on all hands men are thinking that the sun is about to turn on our side of the hedge."

"I hear but little of these matters," said my uncle. "We are out of the way of news. Tell me everything."

"Willingly," said I; "so far as I know of matters. This unrest and the general dislike of the country being dragooned by men who know nothing of the proper arts of government are leading to many plots being formed against the present

authorities, and partisans of the old cause are banding together in hopes of striking a blow to better things."

"And you have been mixed up with one of these affairs?"

"I have," said I; "but there was a traitor among us, for I had a word by a sure hand to tell me that Sir John Postgate knew everything and was taking measures to lay us by the heels."

"Sir John Postgate," said my uncle; "that bitter old Independent fellow. Is he still alive?"

"He is, indeed," I returned. "And as active as ever. I took the road within two hours, and, after making a long loop to throw off pursuit, headed for your mountains."

"'Twas impossible to do better," said Sir Arthur. "You are safe here as man can be. If it was known where you were, no force could come through the hills without our being aware of it, and you have only to march half-a-mile beyond Nant y Bryn to have thirty miles of hiding places open to you."

I thanked him and we were by this time in front of the house.

It was a huge building, very broad for its height, and constructed of squared masses of the dark grey stone which the neighbourhood yielded plentifully, the windows small, with the lowest a good height from the ground and heavily ironed, the door of three inch oak, studded with stout bolts and nails.

"You will think Nant y Bryn a mere dungeon, I fear, after our beautiful Butley Croft, nephew," said Sir Arthur, waving hishand to wards the gloomy pile; "but it was built at a day when men looked more for strength than comfort, and perchance we may need its strength once more."

"Ay, ay," said Owain, for we four were together again, and the young lady looked grave.

My uncle blew a call on a shrill whistle which hung from a button of his coat, and a man appeared from within. Whitesock and the black horse were handed over to his care, and we entered a large, ill-lighted hall. My uncle at once carried me to his library that we might finish our conversation. It was a long, low room, one wall more than half covered with books, a dozen volumes scattered about a broad, oaken table, and near the hearth, a great elbow chair into which he dropped, and stretched his feet towards the ample fire of logs and turf blazing on the wide hearth.

"So you must keep out of the way for a few months, nephew?" said he.

"More than that, uncle," said I, "if I am to save my neck."

"Pooh!" laughed Sir Arthur. "You young fellows put too much importance on your escapades."

"Third time pays for all," said I.

"What do you mean?" asked my uncle.

"First," said I, "I was with Penruddock."

"In '55," cried Sir Arthur, "you, a boy!"

"I was nineteen," I returned, "and as tall as I am now. A dozen of us rode down south from Worcestershire."

"What followed?" demanded Sir Arthur.

"Nothing, so far as I was concerned," said I. "We paid our tenth to the major-generals, but, of course, so did the rest of the Cavaliers."

"And next?"

"I was with Sir George Booth, last summer at Chester."

"I see," said my uncle "you've had practice before at running away."

"From Winnington Bridge, you mean?" said I. "Yes; Whitesock carried me through the fight, and then thirty miles from the field before I drew rein. I got clear by forfeiting The Chase and Copp's Holding."

My uncle raised his hands and let them fall. "The Chase and Copp's Holding," he groaned, "I would exchange my waste of barren hills for the rental of either. Nephew, I have done wrong to desert Butley Croft for so many years. You will dash the estate to pieces."

"Sir Arthur!" I cried, "would you have me idle when such things were in train? How could I hang back? Why, there are others who have lost all for the King."

"And it is likely you have lost all, too," said Sir Arthur, looking venomously upon me. "Do you think they will forego such a goodly chance as this?"

I stared at my uncle in astonishment. I had supposed our family to be imbued through and through with the principles in which I had been brought up, and these were that the sacrifice of anything and everything was to be made at once and gladly in the service of the King. Then I bethought myself that perhaps my uncle, keeping aloof from such affairs for so many years, had conceived unfavourable opinions of my rashness, and supposed that I had pushed forward when there was but little need, wasting strength which might afterwards have been more useful.

He sat staring into the fire, the long, slender, fingers of one hand tapping nervously on the back of the other. In form he was tall and thin, and slightly stooping, and, though still under sixty, his hair was white.

"You have reason to be afraid, nephew," said he, looking up at me quickly. "If they catch you now they will either shoot you out of hand or ship you off to the colonies."

I laughed and stood up.

"They have to catch me, first," said I.

I stripped off my riding-coat, and my uncle glanced at me curiously.

"I must make you my banker, sir," and his eye fired instantly. A small, sharp knife for making pens lay on the table and I took it and began to rip up the lining of my coat.

As I hacked at the stitches, gold coins began to pour down freely. Some rolled on the floor, and Sir Arthur Vaughan pounced on these and collected them carefully. Then he began to arrange them in stacks of ten. He laughed gleefully as he did so.

"Why, Geoffrey, this is a rare device to stow your money. It clinks in its fall like music. 'Tis a second shower of Danæ."

"When I had the word to march," said I, "Roger Thorne, the steward, hastened to drum up what store of gold there was about the place, and old Dorothy, the housekeeper, sat down at once to fasten them in small parcels in my coat. I wanted to put them in a bag, but she insisted, and indeed I have carried them more easily and surely thus."

"One hundred and seven pieces of minted gold," said Sir Arthur. "The sight does my eyes good."

"Why, uncle," I cried, "surely you and gold are not such strangers as that. I have heard that you have here half as many acres again as we have at Butley Croft."

"Acres," repeated my uncle, twisting his features into a contemptuous expression; "acres enough, and that were all. But of what worth? Three out of four of them feed you one sheep, and that a little one, per acre and the rest are nothing great to speak of."

Land so poor as that went clean beyond my experience or imagination and I could only nod my head in sympathy as my uncle continued to grumble about the poverty of Nant y Bryn.

"Never a penny do I receive in coin from the tenants," said he, reaching a black leathern book from a shelf near the fireplace, and opening it. "Here are their methods of payment and you might as well try to shake the hills themselves as to try to change their customs. Jenkin Evans," he read, "holds sixty acres of land known as Tynant. He pays yearly two cows, a three-year-old ox, and four sheep. Evan Jenkins holds seventy acres, Frongoch, he pays three tubs of butter, six pigs, and thirty sheep. Pedr Williams the weaver, he pays forty yards of homespun cloth and a roll of blanket stuff. I have to be my own chapman and turn these things to account as well as I can. It's a poor country this, a poor country."

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Gold coins began to pour down freely.

CHAPTER VI.

My Uncle's Enemies.

I looked into the fire and knew not what to say. I had scarcely expected to be called upon so suddenly to pity my uncle's circumstances. It seemed rushing on at a stride to a stage in our confidence which ought to be of a later date—if, indeed of any date—for when a man sat before a great fire in a great house, well provided with everything necessary to living, except the mere counters of money, it seemed to me that he was crying out before he was hurt.

"Uncle,' said I, as the thought flashed into my mind, "who are these men who are haunting the country, the men who seized Miss Vaughan?"

My uncle went as white as paper, and drew in his breath suddenly. His dark eyes dilated and glowed, but whether in anger or fear I could not tell.

"Y Gwylliaid Cochion," he said in a low voice, and then, as if the sound fascinated him, he repeated slowly again "Y Gwylliaid Cochion."

"That's the name I heard," said I, and I told him of the man who would not venture into the hills.

"They are a band of thieves," said my uncle, "and very ferocious, dangerous fellows, too. Gwylliaid means men who move about in the dusk; cochion is the mere adjective red. It is applied to them because they are all red-haired. They marry and intermarry in and in among the band, and I believe that a black-haired one was never whelped. If it was, they would instantly dispose of it to keep up their tradition."

"The Red Men of the Dusk," said I. "Why dusk?"

"Because," replied Sir Arthur, "they lie by closely in the day and never stir till the dusk falls. You might march through their very haunts in daylight and you would go safely. But let the sun set and find you on the hills with no shelter near at hand and you may turn your head and see one moving on you as noiseless as a shadow, and as unexpectedly as if the earth had yawned behind you and flung him forth. It is this peculiarity of theirs which makes people so frightened of them. Many of the ignorant are more than half persuaded that the Red Men of the Dusk are not mortal, but are evil spirits of the mountain."

"There is a man among them in author ty, who seemed mortal enough," said I. "I met him by chance, and he was willing enough to quarrel and fight, and a terrible fighter he was."

I began to describe the swordsman, and my uncle held up his hand before I had said a dozen words.

"Ieuan Gwyllt," said he; "that is, in English 'Wild John.'"

I went on to describe our encounter, and, at the mention of our crossing swords, my uncle looked up with extraordinary interest.

"You killed him," he cried eagerly. "Say you killed him?"

"That was more than I could do in fair fight," I rejoined. "I had a chance of doing it, certainly, but it was not a chance which a gentleman could take."

"What chance? How?" panted by uncle.

I told the story.

"And I say, nephew, that you are little better than an idiot," screamed my uncle, "with your foolish notions and raw fancies of honour and fair play and the like. There is your enemy. Kill him, I say, kill him. To think you had Ieuan Gwyllt at your feet and spared him. Oh, to think of it! I would have given half I possess to enjoy such a chance."

He sprang from his chair and paced the room excitedly. He looked at me with a scowl, and it is possible that I was looking black also, for I felt by no means pleased with the compliments my relative had showered upon me. Sir Arthur stopped suddenly and smiled. It was not a happy smile, and when he laughed, as he proceeded to do, there was no mirth in the sound.

"Geoffrey," said he, "your story excited me not a little. And I fear my excitement carried me beyond the bounds of politeness. If you only knew what reasons I have to hate Ieuan Gwyllt you would have given him no quarter, but would instantly have struck him out of my path."

"Out of your path, sir?" said I, for he had half apologised, and that was enough for me from an old man and a near relation.

"Out of my path," repeated Sir Arthur. "The story is this. Five and twenty years or more ago the father of Ieuan Gwyllt belonged to those of whom we have been speaking. The chief of that day died, and a fierce quarrel arose between two cousins for the vacant place. The one who was worsted left the band and settled, without his origin being known, on this estate. He was the father of Ieuan Gwyllt, and Ieuan, then a child, came with him. Until two years ago Ieuan was a favoured tenant, treated by me with the utmost consideration and kindness. Then he took it into his head that he had some grievance against me, and twice I was fired at as I rode home in the dusk."

"He tried to kill you—a tenant on the estate tried to kill you!" I exclaimed, for matters were on quite another footing at Butley Croft, and, for matter of that, everywhere else of which I knew in Worcestershire.

"He tried to kill me," repeated my uncle, dropping his hand with solemn and deliberate gesture on the table. "I endeavoured to restrain him, as much to save him from the consequences which his violent temper would bring upon him as to protect myself, but he fled to his tribe. There he soon rose to authority, and he has made use of it to draw them to this side of the country. Partly, also, they had made their old haunts too hot to hold them."

(To be continued.)

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£1,000 FOR YOU!

£25 FOR A NEWSAGENT OR BOOKSTALL CLERK. £5 FOR EACH OF THE BOOKSTALL BOYS. £50 FOR WITNESSES.

TO win this substantial sum of money, all you have to do is to fill up the coupon below, giving in the proper place the number of births and the number of deaths which will occur in the thirty-three great towns in the United Kingdom for the week ending April 22nd, 1899.

Then write down your name and address and ask five of your friends to write their names and addresses in the spaces provided. Any coupon not bearing these names will be disqualified.

Also ask the newsagent or bookstall clerk, from whom you obtain this copy of *S. S.*, to insert his name and address in the space provided. Although such a course is obviously to his advantage, it is not compulsory for the coupon to bear his signature.

Witnesses, newsagents, and bookstall clerks may sign any number of coupons, and competitors may sign each other's as witnesses.

To the person whose attempt is correct we will pay the sum of **£1,000.**

To the newsagent or bookstall clerk whose name appears on the winning coupon we will pay the sum of **£25**, and **£5** to each of the boys attached to the bookstall from which the paper was bought.

To each of the witnesses whose names appear on the winning coupon we will pay the sum of **£10.**

If no competitor estimates the correct number of births and deaths, the £1,000 will be awarded to the individual whose forecast is most nearly correct.

In the event of two or more persons being correct, the £1,000 will be divided amongst them. This condition applies also to the £25 for the newsagent or bookstall clerk, the £5 for bookstall boys, and the £10 for each of the persons who sign the winning coupons.

SOME POINTS TO REMEMBER.

One competitor may send in any number of attempts, but each coupon must be signed by five persons under the conditions mentioned above.

The addresses of the five witnesses must be written in full. If, however, they are all of the same town, it will be sufficient if the sentence, "All of Bradford, or Liverpool, or Glasgow," as the case may be, is written on the margin

It is necessary for each coupon sent in by one competitor to bear five signatures, but the same five people may sign as many coupons as they like. It is not necessary for each competitor to find a fresh set of witnesses for each coupon. Competitors may sign for one another.

There is no objection to rubber stamps being used in place of signatures.

Coupons from Pearson's Weekly, Home Notes, M. A. P., Pastimes, Sunday Reader, Big Budget, and Pick-Me-Up are all available in this competition.

You may keep all the coupons and send them in to reach here by the closing day if you wish.

The coupons belonging to each separate competitor must be inclosed in one envelope or parcel. Two or three competitors may not send in together.

The prize will be awarded to the competitor whose two figures are correct or most nearly correct. For example, if the correct figures are 7,000 and 3,000 respectively, the competitor whose forecasts are 6,999 and 2,999 will take precedence over the competitor whose forecasts are, say, 7,000 and 2,997 respectively.

All correspondence regarding this competition must be addressed to The Editor, *Pearson's Weekly*, Henrietta Street, London, W.C., and NOT marked BIRTHS. Only envelopes containing coupons should be marked in this way.

It must be clearly understood that all persons who enter for this competition must abide by the decision of the Editor in any question that may arise in connection with the competition.

As a guide to your estimate we give below the number of Births and Deaths which have taken place in the thirty-three largest towns in the United Kingdom for the corresponding period for the past three years.

The figures as published by the Registrar-General will be taken as correct. On December 2nd, 1898, a competition similar to this was declared legal by the Appeal Court.

Registered during the Week Ending April 25th, 1896.		Registered during the Week Ending April 24th, 1897.		Registered during the Week Ending April 23rd, 1898.	
Births.	Deaths.	Births.	Deaths.	Births.	Deaths.
6,783	4,062	6,226	3,965	7,202	3,905

All attempts to be addressed to the Editor, Short Stories, Henrietta Street, London, W.C., and the envelope to be marked in the left-hand corner with the word: "Births."

THE COMPETITION CLOSES ON MONDAY, APRIL 17th.

S. S.

My estimate is { *Births* ..... / *Deaths* ..... } *Write in large Figures.*

Name .....

Address .....

Signatures of five people:

1. .....

2. .....

3. .....

4. .....

5. .....

*Newsagent or Bookstall Clerk** .....

* If a bookstall clerk, the name of the station will be sufficient.

THIS PRIZE IS IN CONJUNCTION WITH "PEARSON'S WEEKLY," "HOME NOTES," "SUNDAY READER," "PASTIMES," "BIG BUDGET," "PICK-ME-UP," and "M. A. P."

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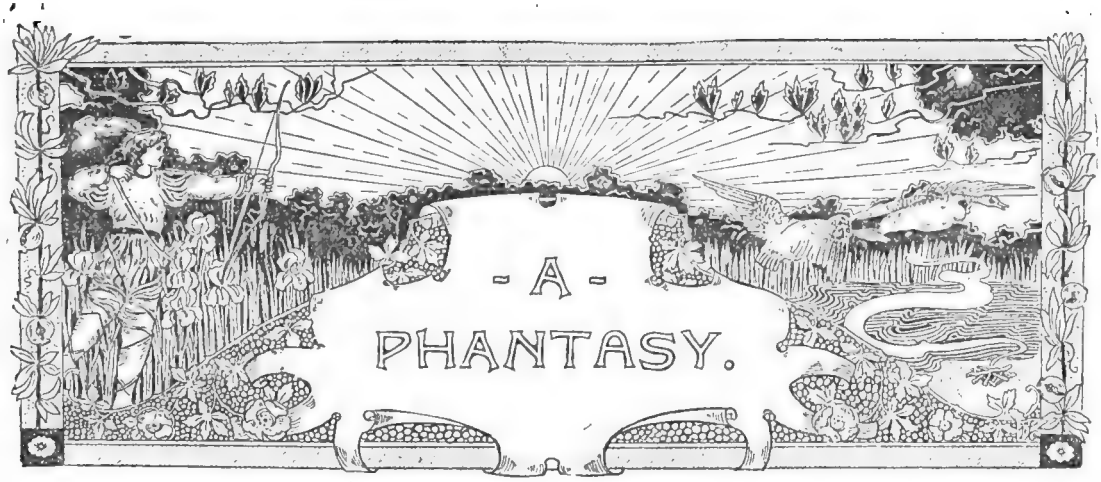

It was a chance remark, and one that is often made concerning an intelligent anim l, but its effect upon my friend Sidney Darrow was singular.

His shoulders twitched nervously, and his hand went up to his throat as though something choked him.

I have a large mastiff that I call Woden. A moment before, he had left his accustomed place on a rug in one corner of the room, and had come to my side, to receive the caress which, at intervals through the day, he seems to find necessary to his happiness. As I smoothed his wrinkled forehead and patted his soft, large ears, I observed with what trustful affection his great eyes beamed upon me.

It was then that I remarked to Sidney Darrow, who sat near at hand, carelessly watching us through the smoke of his pipe:

"Does it not seem to you sometimes that Woden has a very human look?"

And my friend made no answer with the peculiar motions which I have described.

Woden left my side, and walked slowly back to his rug. Darrow watched his movements with half-closed eyes, his hand still clutched his throat. When the dog had lain down, my friend turned his gaze upon me.

"Don't say that about Woden again! It will make me hate him."

He was plainly much moved, and the seriousness of his appeal was not to be doubted.

Presently, before I was ready to make any reply, he separated the heavy beard that covered his chin and neck, disclosing a deep, zig-zag scar.

"Look here," he said, "I never showed you this."

"What made it—a burn?"

"No. Let me tell you the story."

* * * * *

"There was a period of my life, some years ago, that I spent on my uncle's ranch near San Juan Capistrano. At that time the raising of sheep was one of the chief industries of Southern California, and much of the land in our vicinity was devoted to pasturage.

"About half-a-mile from my uncle's house, in a lonely cañon, stood the hut of a shepherd—built of sun-dried clay, repulsive without, cheerless within, grim and squalid, yet in every way so well suited to its solitary inhabitant, that one might think he had constructed it about himself, as the nautilus does its shell.

"He was a tall, hard-visaged man, with a great shaggy, black beard, haggard features, and eyes that you could not look into without a shudder. Do you understand what I mean? He was one of those wild beasts of men, whose faces, seen but once, live always in your memory; and when sleep will not come, they show themselves—bodiless masks as they are—through your tightly-closed eyelids.

"The trail of the cañon passed within a few yards of the hut, and my duties—I assisted my uncle in the management of the ranch—frequently led me in that direction.

"When not away on the hillside with his flock of sheep, the shepherd usually stood or squatted motionless in front of his hovel. A few feet away from him crouched his dog. The pair, man and beast, stared at me from the moment I came in sight, until I passed among the oaks beyond, making no movement, save a slow turning of the head, and offering no response to my salutation. At last I came to pass them in silence, but never without a vague sense of dread.

"I learned from the men on my uncle's ranch that the shepherd was considered queer, or, as they expressed it, 'locoed.' They said he was in the habit of talking to his dog, as though it were a man; and that even his fellow-countrymen feared and avoided him.

"Crazy he may have been—a drunkard he certainly was. At frequent intervals he appeared in the town with a large, black demijohn, which he carried away, filled with liquor of the sort that makes maniacs.

"One afternoon, as I came down the cañon, I heard the yelping of a dog, and approaching the hut of the shepherd, beheld a sight that filled me with anger and distress.

"The fellow had hung up the dog by the hind legs against the side of the house, and was beating him with a large, knotted stick.

"I did not stop to think much of the consequences. I did as you, or any man who has ever known a dog, would have done. I jumped from the saddle, and, drawing my knife as I ran, cut the animal down. Then I turned and faced the shepherd.

"I suppose he thought I was armed—which I was not—for he did not take up the gage of battle, but stared at me fiercely out of his blood-shot eyes.

"The dog hobbled away to a short distance, shook off the rope with which its legs were entangled, and, crouching low, watched us.

"'Come,' I said in Spanish; 'why should you kill your dog? You have drunk too much *aguardiente*. To-morrow you will be glad that I saved his life.'

"He emitted a strange sound through his teeth and lips. It was very like the snarl of a wolf.

"'If you do not care for the dog, will you sell him?' I asked.

"'No,' he replied, with an oath; 'I will not sell him, I mean to kill him.'

"'Very well,' I said, 'if you wish to take the animal's life, shoot him; but you shall not beat him to death.'

"The shepherd turned towards the hut, muttering imprecations a ternately against the dog and myself. When he came to the door, he called to the dog:

"'Demonio! Come here!'

"The animal eyed him but did not move. Then the shepherd disappeared from view in the dark interior of the hovel.

"I remounted, and continued on my way down the trail. I had gone about a hundred yards, when suddenly there was a crashing in the thicket behind, and I wheeled hastily round to discover the dog. He had followed, evidently, for the purpose of making my acquaintance, and to thank me for the rescue.

"I called to him and patted the side of my saddle, meaning that he should come where I could touch him. He came nearer to obey, but, as he approached, my horse gave a violent snort, and began to shy away from him. The act surprised me not a little, for the animal was a stolid old bronco that rarely started at anything, least of all at a dog.

"The dog stopped his advance and watched us, while I struggled to bring the horse nearer to him, and to calm his very evident terror. But my efforts were unavailing, though I used whip and spur and threw all my strength on the bridle. The horse would not allow the dog to touch him. For some strange cause he even trembled in his presence. At last I gave up the undertaking and examined the shepherd's companion from a little distance.

"He was considerably larger than the average collie. I imagine that he must have had some Newfoundland, or, perhaps, St Bernard blood—the sheep-dogs of California are rarely of pure breed. His hair was short, curly, and black as night. He squatted on his haunches, and looked steadily at me during all the time that I occupied in making the survey; and when, at last, I spoke to him, he lifted his ears a little, but made no other movement.

"'Demon!' I said; 'Is that your name—Demonio?'

"At first I thought that the name had been given to him because he was dark in colour, as the popular belief paints an evil spirit. But a moment later, when my eyes rested on his, I saw—or, perhaps, I should say I felt—that there might be some further reason.

"I scarcely knew how to describe the effect that his steady gaze produced on me. It was at first merely an impression that this dog was different from any of his species that I had ever known before—then a conviction that *something was wrong*—and, lastly an uncontrollable terror.

"These sensations followed one another in quick succession—almost in a flash, and without stopping to ask myself any questions I gave my horse free rein, and we went plunging headlong down the trail.

"Once again in the open plain, I tried to deceive myself into thinking that my terror had been only apprehension lest the shepherd should come upon me from behind. The rapid descent of the twilight, and the peculiar behaviour of the horse had, I assured myself, served to heighten the effect of this dread.

"A few days later, when I passed the hut, the shepherd and his dog, in their usual attitudes, stared at me, sullen and silent. I looked closely at the dog's face, but could see nothing but keen animal intelligence.

"Several months passed.

"One morning, as I went out towards the corral, one of the men employed on the ranch came to me and said:

"'I believe that something has happened to that crazy old shepherd. His dog came last night, and would not go away.'

"'What, Demon?' I said, and, as I spoke, the animal came running up.

"I patted his head, and talked to him, but he jumped about uneasily, as though he were anxious to be gone.

"I suggested to the man that we should ride to the cañon, and, mounting, we followed the dog out into the road. He ran along several yards in advance of us, looking back, occasionally, to make sure that we were coming.

"When the cañon was reached, his pace slackened, and, some distance from the hut, he stopped, and fell in behind us.

"'He dreads a beating,' said I.

"From the trail we called to the hut, and receiving no answer, rode up to the door and looked in.

"There lay the shepherd in the middle of the floor, his arms outstretched, and his head thrown back—dead.

"An uncared-for corpse is always a disagreeable object to look upon, but something had happened to this one that rendered it impossible for me to give it more than one quick glance. I hastily turned my horse's head away, and rode over towards the spot where the dog was crouching. My companion, more resolute than I, dismounted, and went into the hut. When he came out again, he said:

"'I covered it over with one of those sheep skins, so that it shouldn't scare anyone else. His bottle was lying near him, and I guess he must have drunk himself to death. *That* was probably done by coyotes, or maybe a mountain-lion.'

"We rode to town, where we gave notice to the authorities of the man's death, and also to several of his countrymen. In talking with one of the latter, I asked him what disposition would be made of the dead man's sheep and of his dog.

"'The sheep,' answered the man, 'were not his; he had sold them. As to the dog, nobody wants the brute, I imagine.'

"'Why not?'

"The man shrugged his shoulders, and looked askance at Demon, who had followed me.

"'Very well,' I said, 'then I will take him.'

"No objection was made, and Demon passed into my possession.

"My uncle had several hundred sheep, which were tended by an old native Californian and his son. I took Demon to them, and offered his services in the care of the flock. To my surprise they refused. I urged the matter, and finally demanded the ground of their opposition. At last the old man said:

"'He looks like a sheep-killer.'

"This accounted for the refusal of the other shepherds to take the dog; they, too, suspected him. Knowing how prone such men are to superstitious prejudices, I would not allow the animal to be condemned without a cause.

"'Do you know that he kills sheep?' I asked the old man.

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"He shook his head. Then I asked if anyone had ever seen the dog prowling about at night, or behaving in a suspicious manner. Again he shook his head.

"'It is all nonsense,' I said, finding myself fairly forced into the position of the dog's defender.

"'Now, I tell you,' said the old shepherd; 'I know that dog. I think him a bad dog. I will show you something.'

"He went into his hut, and brought out two half-grown puppies—lively, wriggling little fellows—and put them down on the ground before Demon.

"'You see,' he said, 'puppies always try to play with strange dogs—never afraid of them. Look! I told you he is a bad dog.'

"The infants waddled up to Demon, who approached them wagging his tail good-humouredly. But the instant they got a good view of his face, they whirled about and went off ki-yi-ing at a great rate.

"The performance struck me as amusing, and I laughed, but the old shepherd looked very grave.

"'A bad dog,' he reiterated, slowly; 'very bad.'

"'Well,' I said, 'I will take him myself, since you will not. But if I ever learn'—here I instinctively looked down into the dog's face, as though speaking to him—'if I ever learn that he has killed a sheep, I shall have him shot.'

"The dog's eyes looked up into mine with a keen, intelligent gaze, and I could not resist the belief that he had understood me.

"It is not improbable that my prejudice against the animal was even stronger than that of the shepherd's; but, as I was an educated, reasoning man, proud of my freedom from every form of superstition, how could I bring myself to countenance such irrational fancies? On the contrary my duty seemed to lie in the opposite direction—to defy this prejudice, and to protect and defend the object at which it was levelled. Besides, I had come to feel an overpowering curiosity with regard to this creature, which, though apparently inoffensive, was so generally hated and feared. What was it that inspired all other animals with such distrust of him? For not my horse alone, but every quadruped on the place manifested a very evident unwillingness to have him about. The other dogs would not associate with him. Yet he was never quarrelsome or ill-tempered.

"One thing he did which, though not a serious fault, was often annoying. He had a habit of watching closely every motion of the person nearest him—usually myself. Sometimes I almost imagined that I could feel his eyes, when I did not see them—his gaze was so constant and intense. This habit, I thought to myself, was acquired during his life with the brutal shepherd, who might be expected at any moment to inflict some undeserved blow upon him. Despite this explanation, there were times, when we were alone together, and I looked up to find him watching me, that I felt the chill of an unreasoning dread.

"Demon had been in my possession several weeks, when all at once I began to hear complaints about the killing of sheep. Every morning a fresh victim was found—dead—now of one flock, and now of another, yet all within a limited range. They were all mutilated in the same way, and the work was plainly that of a dog, practiced in sheep-killing. As I had expected, suspicion immediately fell upon Demon; and one morning when I came out of the house, I found a couple of shepherds waiting to see me.

"They had no evidence against the dog, yet they demanded that he should be put to death. The injustice of it roused my indignation, and, calling Demon to me, I said:

"'I want you to look at him. You say that a sheep was killed last night. Where is there any sign of blood about his jaws?'

"One of them examined Demon's mouth, but found no mark of the slaughter. The other said:

"'That does not prove anything. A regular sheep-killer does not spill much blood, and sometimes he learns to wash it all off.'

"This sounded improbable to me, but I did not argue the matter.

"'Very well,' I said; 'to-night Demon shall be shut up in the corral, and if a sheep is killed, we shall know that he is not the guilty dog.'

"They shook their heads.

"'He will find some way to get out of the corral,' said one of them.

"'Then he shall sleep in my room with me,' I said; 'and the door and shutters shall be closed. Does that suit you?'

"This arrangment seemed to satisfy them, and they went away.

"That night I took Demon to my room, and gave him a mat in the corner for a bed. His only possible means of escape was by the door or by the window.

"I locked the door, and closed the window shutter, and hooked it in place. Then I went to bed, and almost immediately fell asleep.

"In the morning when I woke, Demon lay upon his mat, apparently in sound slumber.

"I began to dress.

"When I was nearly done, my uncle rapped at the door.

"'Have you Demon in there?' he called out.

"'Yes,' I answered, opening the door.

"He exhibited much surprise.

"'Another sheep was killed last night,' said he.

"'Well,' I replied, 'that merely proves what I have said—that Demon is innocent.'

"'Yes, of course,' said my uncle, looking doubtfully at the dog.

"He went over to the window, and inspected the fastening.

"'Impossible!' he said.

"'For him to open it?' I asked. 'Of course.'

"My uncle threw the shutter back, and pointed significantly at the flower-bed below. The plants had been crushed down, and the earth displaced, and round about were numerous dog-tracks.

"'That was not there yesterday,' said he.

"My room was on the ground-floor, and, from the window to the earth, was only two or three feet. Had the shutter been open, the dog might easily have climbed out and in again, but it had been fastened all night.

"I turned and looked at Demon. He was watching us stealthily, with the expression in his eyes that I knew and dreaded.

"My uncle made another examination of the fastening of the shutter.

"At last he said:

"'I am convinced that the sheep-killer is not Demon. There is no dog in existence that could manipulate that crooked hook to open the shutter. Those footprints were left there by some stray animal.'

"The conviction seemed inevitable, and I agreed with him. At the same time, I was resolved to try the experiment again, and watch the dog more carefully.

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"That night I shut Demon in as before, and closed and fastened both door and shutter. There was a full moon, which made the landscape bright as day without, and it occurred to me, just as I was about to put out my lamp, that I could throw open the upper half of the shutter and admit the light. It fell in a broad, white square directly across the mat where the dog lay, and after I got into bed, I found that I could watch him easily, without turning my head upon the pillow.

"Then I discovered that he was watching me. There was nothing unusual about that—only his eyes were strangely bright.

"I tossed about in the bed for a time, but he never moved.

"At last I determined to deceive him into the belief that I was asleep. I closed my eyes, and, presently, by a careless movement, drew the lace edge of the pillow-slip across my face. Thus I could watch him, and yet conceal the fact that my eyes were open.

"When I had lain in this position motionless, for, perhaps, ten minutes, Demon suddenly lifted his head, and turned it on one side.

"Plainly he was listening—for what, I could not imagine. He put his head down, and for another ten minutes did not move.

"Then, gradually and noiselessly, he rose to his feet, and came towards the bed.

"A little distance away he stopped and listened again Evidently he did not hear what he expected, for after standing a moment, he returned to his corner and lay down.

"Suddenly I found the explanation of his strange conduct. He had listened to my breathing, that he might determine if I slept.

"Resolved to deceive him if possible, I began slowly to lengthen my respiration, and to expel it with more sound and force.

"At the end of a few minutes, I saw that I was succeeding in my design.

"A second time he rose with perfect stillness and came to the bed His face wore an expression of fiendish cunning, so utterly foreign to his customary mien, that under other circumstances, I should have failed to recognise him.

"A swift flash of satisfaction in his eyes showed that he thought me asleep, and he turned to the window to make his escape.

"His motions were slow and cautious, reminding me of a cat, rather than a dog. I had expected him to make some slight noise in unhooking the shutter, for I doubt if I myself, with my life in hazard, could have accomplished it inaudibly. But there was no sound to be heard in the room, except that of my own slow, steady respiration.

"I think it must have taken him five minutes to draw the hook. Then the shutter was swung back quietly inch by inch, and his way was clear.

"He stood for a moment with his forepaws upon the window-sill, and looked back at me. As he did so, I felt again the same strange impression of terror that had overwhelmed me the first time my eyes had met his in that lonely cañon. For an instant I held my breath and had he continued to look, he must have discovered that I was not asleep. But now, with a sudden, yet noiseless leap, he went out of the window—gone on his murderous quest.

"It was several minutes before I ventured to move.

"At last I rose and went to the window. Far away where the bright moonlight fell upon the side of the hill I could see a small patch of darkness scudding swiftly along. It was Demon on his way to the sheep pastures.

"I scarcely know what impulse actuated me, but I went to the closet in my room, took down a large navy revolver, and, when I got back into bed, slipped it underneath my pillow. I did not then, and will not now confess to any real fear of the dog—that is to say, physical fear. There was a dread—a vague, indistinct horror—at something unexplainable that I seemed to see in his eyes. But had I really feared him I should have closed the shutter, rendering his return impossible.

"I lay still and watched for an hour. The nearest flocks, I knew, could be reached in a few minutes, and his return might be expected any time. I drew the lace over my eyes again, and listened for a sound that should indicate his approach.

"Suddenly a great, black head appeared at the window—without the warning of a footfall—materialised, as it seemed out of the darkness of the night. In it two round, red lights gleamed like coals of fire. The moon shone clear and full on his face, and I could plainly see the blood and foam with which his jaws were covered.

"He climbed slowly into the room. Then, with an ingenuity that was even more than human, he closed the shutter noiselessly, and fastened it in place.

"He gave one quick glance at me, and went over to his corner. Through the net-work of the lace I watched him, while he licked the blood-stains from his feet, and washed his face and neck, with the motions and attitude of a cat.

"I grew faint with the horror of it all, and, at last forgot the part which I was playing, and ceased to counterfeit the respiration of one who sleeps. Even when Demon suddenly started up, looked at me, and listened, I did not notice my mistake.

"Then he came nearer to the bed—a few feet away—and glared at me out of those terrible eyes.

"That was the moment in which I saw the thing and understood it all. You will not believe it—I don't ask that you should—but I saw through that creature's eyes down into the lost human soul that occupied its body.

"It was the soul of a murderer—the destroyer of the drunken shepherd in his lonely hovel, the slayer of the sheep—now, at last, throwing off all disguise.

"With a strange, half-animal and half-human cry, the thing sprang at my throat. I threw up my hand and it missed its aim, the teeth closing only on the skin. The next instant I fired the revolver, and it rolled over, dead.

"The wound was not serious, but it left that ugly-looking scar. There is another scar that the experience left, which is probably much larger—if one could see it. I mean on my memory." C. D. Wood.

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.. From Prairie and Backwoods. ..

II.—JOHNNY.

It was just before the last and by far the worst outbreak of the Apaches in the Black Range that the parson and me felt called upon to rid the camp of the gamblers, outcasts, and other social pests which we concluded had had their day.

It raised a howl at first, but we had the inside track. Gibbs being our justice, and Shady, who had just been let out of prison, reformed and joined our mission, had promised to assist the prosecution, as he said, "to the eternal perdition of the wicked."

Of course, our church was a good deal bigger and stronger now than when we were trying to build it, and it annoyed us when the gamblers threw the fact in our teeth that they had contributed towards its erection when we started, and had never refused a subscription when called upon, which, we had to admit, was pretty often.

But the parson and me and the rest of the mission determined that the camp needed purifying, and the first thing on the programme was the banishment of the gamblers and the balance of our non-producing population, both male and female.

As I said, there was a storm when our edict went forth, but none howled so loud as a little gambler whom they called "Johnny," and who acted as a cashier of Bledsoe's bank in the Long Branch saloon.

I never heard his other name; I don't think he had one; it was just "Johnny," and if anyone spoke of Johnny's committing any unlawful act, the whole camp knew what "Johnny" it was. He was an ordinary-looking little rascal, pale and white-like. The parson said it was morphine—perhaps it was—but when he wasn't drinking he was quiet enough; and, honestly, I never heard of his doing anything really wicked.

That is, nothing except the time he "cold-decked" me in a poker game in the Fireside saloon, and robbed me of the money intended for my wife and children, though he said afterwards he'd never done it if I hadn't tried to hold out a faked flush on him at cards, and to this day I don't know how he found that out.

But Johnny swore more than anyone when we ordered him and his kind out of camp, and declared in language which I would blush to repeat that he wouldn't go, but would stay until an unmentionable hereafter was converted into an ice field.

We were all ready to put the machinery in motion, and our warrants were sworn out under the vagrant law against all pests in general and Johnny in particular—there was a dozen against him—when the report came which upset a continuance of all legal proceedings.

The Apaches had broken away from their reservation and were sweeping the range, killing men, women, and children. Our camp organised, and all men available—gamblers and the rest—were armed and sent out in squads to gather in the prospecters and ranchers.

We had in our little mining camp about one hundred women and children and about twenty men after the others had left us. Everything had been quiet for three or four days, and we had begun to laugh at our fears, when one afternoon a man came rushing into camp with the news that a band of thirty or forty Apaches were but a few miles from us, and coming our way.

Never did I see such a day before or since in my life! We rounded up all the women and children, some of 'em crying, some of 'em shrieking, and some of 'em fainting, and got them safe enough in the only stone building in the town, and, with plenty of water and provisions, prepared for a siege.

We didn't wait long, for in an hour or so, from the lime ridge just opposite the town and across the creek came one shot and then another and another, until we thought the whole Apache tribe was after us. Our men fired back a few times, but it wasn't any use, because the Indians lay close behind the ledge, and they weren't takin' any chances.

So we just waited, and the parson proposed that we should hold services, and, though nobody voted for it, him and me began. I never heard the parson talk so well as he did with those red devils tryin' to shoot in the window of the room where we were, but the parson and me were in the back part of the store, and knew they couldn't hit us.

But none of the congregation seemed to be in the right spirit for the kind of comfort he was giving them, for the women cried all the louder, and the children

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clung to their mothers, and their mothers kept kissin' them all the time, so that the parson and me couldn't start the hymn.

Suddenly one of the men, peeping out of the window, cried: "Look there!"

Some of us crawled to the window and looked out. Right across the creek on a flat that ran to the lime-ledge was a little house, and as we looked we saw a woman waving a handkerchief towards us as if begging us to come to her.

We counted faces, and soon found who it was; it was Jerry Williams' wife, with her three children, right under the shadow of that ledge; not a man with 'em, and at the awful mercy of those savages as soon as they discovered that the little home was not deserted.

What was to be done? If half-a-dozen men could get within the walls they could easily stand off a hundred Indians; but to get there one had to go down to the creek bottom, up the side under the rocks, and then make a clear run of two or three hundred feet under the very guns of old Nana and his villians, and that meant sure death.

We didn't say nuthin' at first; we were all chilled. Even the women and children left off cryin', thinking of the fate of this lone woman and her babies. We turned to the parson for consolation.

"Don't waste time in talk. Let's *do* something!"

We looked round to see who had spoken. It was Johnny.

He was standing near the wall, holding a little child; he was whiter and paler than ever, and trembling worse than I was. We had allowed him to take refuge with us until the excitement should die out, and then we intended to force the law on him.

Before anyone said a word he put down the child and walked to where we were.

"Fellars," he said, and you could hear a pin drop. "Fellars, there's a woman and three young 'uns right in the jaws of them wolves. If they killed 'em straight out it wouldn't be so bad, but you know what it means if they take women and children."

When he said that some of the women sobbed again and hugged their babies closer to their bosoms.

"Boys," he went on, his voice choking a little, "that poor woman is alone with her kids; her husband has gone off to help save others, and left them in our charge. Are y'u goin' to leave 'em there alone?"

No one spoke. None of us wanted to get the golden harp the parson was preachin' about just yet; we thought we could wait a little while for it.

"*I* am *not*," he cried, trembling with excitement "and you fellars needn't run any risk. What six of you have the nerve to make the break? I'll deal; you play the game. We can get out from here and down to the creek without their seein' us. When we get to the creek bottom I'll go up the stream until I'm at the end of the ledge; you fellars go down the stream till, you get opposite the house, then watch me, and crawl up the bank cautious. Just before y'u get to the top wait and be ready, then I'll jump on the ledge, and, with a war-whoop, make them think a whole army is comin'; they'll turn loose on me. Then's your time; while I'm engagin' their attention you strike for the house. It's easy—see?"

"But you——"

It was one of the women, the mother of the child he had been holding. She hesitated in calling him by his nick-name; there was something about him that awed her.

"Me?" he replied with a laugh. "Oh, it's my game; I'm playin' it."

He patted the head of the child for an instant, and then, drawing his pistol from the belt, walked towards the door.

His spirit had infused the others; six men followed in silence.

We all clustered as near round the window as we dared to watch them, the parson and me remaining behind to administer consolation.

We saw them crawl to the creek bottom, crouch together talking, and then separate, Johnny going up the stream, the other six going down.

With our hearts in our mouths we watched them creeping along.

At last the six brave fellows are opposite the little house with its four precious lives, and only the open flat between them. Johnny was opposite the ledge. We saw them all crawl closer to the top, the Indians ignorant of their presence. We saw Johnny motioning his companions to get a little nearer the edge, then be ready, and then with pistol in each hand he leaped upon the ledge, shrieking, shouting, shooting, and waving his arms as if giving orders and leading a regiment in a charge against the foe.

For an instant there was a hush, except the wild yelling of Johnny. The Indians were taken by surprise; they believed a small army was coming up that bank behind this captain. Only for an instand though, and then every one of the murderous band turned his rifle on Johnny, and a volley followed.

He tottered a minute, poor Johnny! and looked towards the little house as if saying good-bye, and then he fell in a heap over the bank.

But it worked. The other six men, when the Indians fired, made a rush, and in less than half a minute were safe within the walls, ready to keep off every Apache in the tribe.

We sat still, all of us, even the parson. Suddenly we heard the blast of the trumpet. It was the troops coming from Hillsboro'; and when they rode up, and we saw them Apaches flyin' for their ponies, and the soldiers after them, I wept, I was so comforted.

We went over to Mrs. Williams' house first, and she was holding a baby and trying to hug the rest of her children, and asking God to be merciful to the man who had saved her and the little ones, for they had told her the story.

Then we went were Johnny was. He was shot all to pieces, but was still living. He opened his eyes when Mrs. Williams took his head in her arms, and tried to smile when she kissed him. But he was goin' awful fast, and it appeared to the parson a good time and place to say somethin', and preach a moral, so he bent over him and said:

"My poor sinner, do you realise that you will soon be with God; and after your wicked life can you meet him?"

The old smile for an instant seemed to play over the thin lips. He raised his fading eyes to the woman who was holding him and to the sobbing children who were clinging to her, and then, in a whisper so low we could hardly hear him, he gasped:

"Can't tell—parson. If He asks who—I—am—I'll say—'Johnny.' This mother—an' the kids—'ll tell—the—rest."

And when we looked again Johnny was already pleading his cause to the Great Father of us all, and somehow or other I've often wished that the parson and me could plead ours so well.

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NOTES OF INTEREST.

V. N.—In some of the wine districts of France frost bells are tolled when there is likely to be a severe frost, and immediately on hearing the warning the inhabitants hurry out of their houses and place quantities of tar between the rows of vines. Then a signal is given to light the tar, and in a few minutes a dense cloud of smoke arises, and thus the vines are said to be completely protected from the severity of the weather.

D. A.—It is stated by an authority on things canine that every spotted dog has the end of his tail tipped with white.

W.—Probably the most extraordinary story of a wound received in battle is that told of a man named Donald, of the 92nd Regiment. It was during the Waterloo campaign. He had been shot in the thigh by a musket ball. The ball was extracted, but still the wound did not heal. A large abscess formed. Poultices were applied, and on an incision being made, lo and behold! a five-franc piece and a one-franc piece were extracted, together with a bit of cloth, the larger coin having been hit nearly in the centre and forced into the shape of a cup.

Celibate.—Don't go to Friesland. The North Frisians are very unmerciful to people who don't marry. One of their legends says that after death old maids are doomed to cut stars out of the sun when it has sunk below the horizon, and the ghosts of the old bachelors must blow them up in the east, running, like lamplighters, all night up and down a ladder.

J. M.—Oh! yes. Some fine English chrysanthemums, which carried off honours, were frozen specially to send to a coming show at Wellington, New Zealand—taking a hint from the Australasian growers themselves. Each bloom was completely congealed in its zinc stand, the process taking four days.

Actor.—The average life of a theatre is shorter than you suppose. It is twenty-three years. From 1861 to 1867 inclusive, 187 theatres were burnt down, and thirteen every year since has been about the average.

Sui.—How would the following method suit you? Among the Kindeh people, who live on Lake Nyassa, in Africa, the favourite form of suicide is to enter the water and allow oneself to be swallowed by a crocodile. Take more exercise and you will soon get over your fit of pessimism. It's the liver, Sui.

Luna.—Certainly. If you were on the moon the earth would appear to be sixty-four times larger than the sun does to residents of this planet.

N. T.—Most of the inhabitants of Haugesund, Norway, have never tasted intoxicants. It has a population of 6,200, and for twenty nine years not a drop of spirituous liquor has been sold there.

Vel.—In the way of novel prosecutions that which took place at Adelaide some little time ago must be accorded a top place on the list. A bootmaker was fined a guinea and costs for encouraging a constable in idleness. The bootmaker was found in his shop playing draughts with the constable, who ought to have been on active duty at the time. The offence is not a novel one, but the wording of the charge is certainly quaint.

Flo.—A flower cut in the morning will outlast two flowers cut later in the day when the sun is upon them.

J. M. D.—It is singular, but true that the most conspicuous and indelible record which man is making in the strata now forming on the sea floor is written in the bits of coal and ash which are cast from our steamships as they pursue their way over the ocean. The quantity of this *débris* is very great, and, unlike the wrecks, it is very evenly scattered along the paths followed by our great steamships. It is likely that already, in the tracks of our transatlantic commerce, not a square rod would fail to give a trace of this waste from our coal-burning engines. As this material is not attacked by the marine animals, and is very little affected by the other agents of decay, it will doubtless be very perfectly preserved in the strata which are to bear the records of our time.

P. Q.—I have heard of no such law in connection with needles, but when pins were first sold there was such a demand for them that a code was passed permitting their sale only on two days in the year.

C. L.—That is so. According to the insanity returns, sixteen cases in a thousand are caused by love affairs. But according to certain worthy bachelors and spinsters, every person in love is mad; they are completely cured by their marriage.

Lys.—It is generally supposed that the lily is the national flower of France. But this is not the case, for, although the *fleur-de-lys* is often taken for the emblematic flower of France as the rose is of England, it is in reality only the emblem of the old French royalty, and its import is no more a national one than the bees and violets of Napoleon. As a matter of fact, France has no national flower, and if it did possess one it is much more likely to be the daisy than the lily, for this simple flower is a universal favourite with the French. The only heraldic emblem of the country is the Gallic cock.

A. L.—It would work out like this: If the Atlantic were lowered 6,564 feet, the distance from shore to shore would be only half as great, or 1,500 miles. If lowered a little more than three miles—say 19,680 feet—there would be a road of dry land from Newfoundland to Ireland. This is the ridge on which the great Atlantic cables are laid. The Mediterranean is comparatively shallow. A drying-up of 666 feet would leave three different seas, and Africa would be joined with Italy. The British Channel is more like a pond, which accounts for its choppy waves.

Jock.—Horses succumb to cold quicker than any other animal.

A peculiar case of family complications, which will require a lot of beating, comes to me from a Glamorganshire correspondent. A married woman, the fourth wife of her husband, was stated to have been previously the widow of a thrice married man, who has issue from each marriage. The result is that in one house the children are of seven different parentages.

P. L.—The most wonderful vegetable in the world is the truffle. It has neither roots, stem, leaves, flowers, nor seeds.

S. G.—"While there's life there's soap," as the small boy put it, and because you have not yet found any to your liking it does not follow that you never will. You should try the "Chancellor" soaps; they ought to please you, and you would stand a chance of the house that is being offered as a prize in a competition.

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ALMOST INCREDIBLE—YET TRUE.

Is it incredible that an illness of fourteen years should be cured in two months? Some may say it is impossible. But *why* is it impossible? A fire that has been blazing and smouldering alternately for fifty years may be completely extinguished in an hour. The most thorough and permanent reforms that ever took place in human affairs have been *comparatively sharp and sudden.* I tell you that when the right forces get to work at certain kinds of evil, the element of time hardly enters into the calculation. In some parts of America, for instance, the tremendous change from winter to summer practically occurs in two or three weeks. Every statement in the annexed letter has been carefully verified, yet in the middle ages the result would have been attributed to no power less than a power able to work miracles:

"In the summer of 1875," says the writer, "after my confinement, I took a cold chill and failed to get up my strength. Cold, clammy chills broke over me, and I felt too exhausted to stir hand or foot. I had a bad taste in the mouth, and my tongue was coated with slimy matter. I had no appetite, and after every bit of food I ate I had pain at the chest and a sinking feeling at the pit of the stomach. My breathing was short and laboured, and I had to be propped up with pillows.

"My knees and feet were swollen, being puffed up like a bladder; and after a time they broke out. *For months I lay in bed unable to do anything;* and at other times I could barely walk about the house. I slept badly at night, and got little rest night or day.

"*For fourteen long years I continued in this low, miserable state:* sometimes feeling better, and then bad as ever; but all the time in pain. I saw doctor after doctor, and took medicines of all kinds, but nothing did me any good.

"Often I was so bad I thought I should die, and was *attended by the doctors and clergy.* All my friends and neighbours believed I would never get better.

"In August, 1889, a book was sent to me by post, in which I read about Mother Seigel's Curative Syrup, and the good it had done many persons. The book described my own ailment, and I then resolved to give the remedy a trial. I sent to Messrs. Gratton and Co., the Chemists, at Belfast, for a supply; and, after taking it a short time, I felt it was doing me good. First I could eat well, and the food agreed with me; and my breathing was easier.

"On this, I persevered with the medicine, and gradually but surely I grew stronger; and in *two months* was in good health, all the pain and depression having left me. I have since been well, keeping Mother Seigel's Syrup in the house as a family medicine; and it always maintains us in health. This remedy has saved my life. You are at liberty to publish my statement, and refer any inquiries to me." (Signed) Jane Usher, Aghadalgon, Glenlavy, near Lisburn, Ireland, August 17th, 1897.

This most remarkable case of cure is well known throughout the district in which it took place. The lady is the wife of Mr. Robert Usher, grocer and publican, and both are highly respected in the Aghadalgon district. Mrs. Usher states that since her wonderful restoration to health, the medicine which did the work is to be found in every house in the district, and in *every instance* it has benefited the persons with whom she has spoken. Both she and her husband tell their friends and customers of what it did for them.

Here we have a case of chronic dyspepsia, with profound complications, of fourteen years' standing, cured in *two months.* It seems amazing—it *is* amazing—yet it is every word true. Other medicines failed, for the simple reason that they were not the right ones for the disease. Mother Seigel's Syrup triumphed, as it were in a moment, because it *was* the right medicine. It had power over the disease, as water has over fire, or as sunlight and heat have over the darkness and damps of night. Beyond this point all is mystery. But what of that? Life itself is a mystery; and so are all things that concern and promote it. The practical fact is, that Mother Seigel's Syrup crushes out disease when other treatment is vain, and snatches from death thousands who, without it, would soon close their weary eyes in the sleep that knows no waking. That is why (like Mrs. Usher) they spread its fame wherever illness and pain cry out for succour.

"Ivy" Soap
IT FLOATS!

PRICE 3D. PER LARGE DOUBLE TABLET

ITS REMARKABLE PROPERTY OF FLOATING ON WATER PREVENTS THE ANNOYANCE OF LOSING THE SOAP, AS IT IS ALWAYS IN SIGHT – READY WHEN WANTED.

☞ TO BE HAD OF ALL GROCERS, STORES, ETC. ☜

IF ANY DIFFICULTY, THREE CAKES WILL BE SENT CARRIAGE PAID, ON RECEIPT OF ADDRESS & TWELVE STAMPS OR ONE SHILLING POSTAL ORDER.

BY SOLE MAKER GOODWINS'

371, Ordsall Lane, Manchester.

MATCHLESS

WARNING TO LADIES.

Beware of Polishes that set up injurious acids when brought in contact with the metal. They impregnate your cloths with verdigris and spoil your hands.

METAL

"SIMPLE TEST."

Dab a small quantity on a penny and leave it overnight. If it sets up acid the surface will become green with that poisonous compound known as verdigris.

MATCHLESS METAL POLISH will not turn any metal green, and is, therefore, free from acid and all injurious ingredients.

POLISH.

LARGEST SALE IN THE WORLD.

PATON, CALVERT & CO., Manufacturers, LIVERPOOL.

WASHES

EVERYTHING

TO BE HAD OF ALL GROCERS &c.

MANUFACTORY: DUKINFIELD, MANCHESTER.

'DOLLY' BLUE

Notice.—"DOLLY" Blue is neatly tied in a white bag to a small handle to hold by whilst using. It is the cheapest and best Laundry Blue in the market. "Dolly" Blue is sold by all Grocers and Oilmen at **1d.** per bag.

☞ **IMPORTANT.**—The public are cautioned against attempts which may be made to supply other Blue, Tints, and Dyes than those of Messrs. W. Edge and Sons Ltd., when "Dolly" Blue, "Dolly" Tints, and "Dolly" Dyes are ordered.

The Dolly Specialities are manufactured by

W. EDGE & SONS LIMITED, BOLTON, LANCS.

ZEBRA
GRATE POLISH.